

weeks before the next ploughing is due. In Jamālpur and Tangāil the *sun*n crop is ploughed into the ground as soon as it flowers. This has a very good effect on the outturn of jute.

In Jamālpur cowsheds are built in the open fields at the beginning of the cold weather and changed to a different place two or three times in the season, so that different fields may have the benefit. Generally speaking, however, quite apart from seeking for new manures, the people are very wasteful even with regard to the supplies that are available. Soil from the bed of *khāls* or *bils* is not used as a surface dressing for unfertile fields, and much of the cowdung is collected by women and children and burnt as fuel or thrown into the *bils* and rivers.

The habit of fencing the fields with bamboos and matting is rapidly extending, but is of very recent origin. So long ago as 1809 Buchanan suggested that hedges should be grown. The people do not like thorns which will hurt their bare feet and the thornless bushes, which might be tried, would possibly take up too much room or die away in the rains. If the practice grows, Government will have to insist on many more roads and pathways.

There is only one kind of plough in general use, made of a single piece of curved wood with a sharp tip, like the head of an anchor, inset. The wood generally used is *sāl* procured from the Madhupur jungle and shaped by the village *mistri*. The iron tips are also locally made and sold separately in any *bazār*. The pole or *is* is made of wood and the yoke may be of wood or of bamboo. Any boy can carry it to the field on his shoulders, and in Khālajuri it is made still lighter by hollowing out the base. In places the Meston plough weighing 8 seers and costing Rs. 6 or 7 has been tried with success.

Imple-  
ments.

The harrow or *moi* is a short ladder made of bamboo. A pair of bullocks drag it over the clods and one or two boys stand on it to increase the weight. The rake or *binda* is a wooden plank with one set of wooden teeth about 5 inches apart. It is drawn by oxen through the young *āus* and jute plants to thin them down and to loosen the earth. A wooden mallet called *ita moogor* or *hāturi* is used to break up heavy clods in a dry field. The *khurpi* is a hand hoe for weeding jute and *āus* paddy. The *kachi* or sickle is used for reaping paddy. The *dāo*, the *kurāl* or axe and the *khanta* or crow bar complete the list of implements in general use.

There are 25,000 carts in the district, but they are not used everywhere for carrying the crops from the field to the

threshing floor. In the eastern parganas bullocks drag the harvest home on bamboo tripods—carts without wheels. The 18th century practice of using bullocks like pack ponies has quite gone into disuse, and a large proportion of each crop is carried home on the heads of the harvesters.

Cattle.

There are about two million cattle in the district and fifty thousand buffaloes. The number of bullocks and cows per square mile varies from 1,270 in Kendua to 240 in Gafargāon. The average for the district is 31 bulls, 89 bullocks, 97 cows and 93 calves.

In 1809 bullocks cost Rs. 3 to 6. Nowadays many are imported from Bihar, and a really good pair are worth from Rs. 80 to 250. Cows giving 2 seers of milk cost from Rs. 40 to 100.

The imported animals are chiefly used by professional cartmen, and the cultivators as a whole have to be content with the weedy and undersized cattle that are bred locally. No trouble is taken about the breeding, quite young and unsuitable bulls being allowed to roam among the flocks, and very few of the cattle are properly fed. In the cold weather in the *bil* areas *dhub* grass grows luxuriantly, and for this reason the eastern *thānās* and Sherpur have the best supply of cattle. Elsewhere the cattle have to satisfy their hunger on the meagre grass which grows on the *ails* of fields or on the roadsides. In the rains they are tied up in the *bāri* and fed on coarse grass cut from the *bils*, or on chopped up straw and water. Insufficient grazing grounds combined with the enervating climate and overwork are responsible for the poor quality of the cattle, which is only to some extent made up by the prodigality of their numbers.

In many places it is quite common to see cows yoked to the plough, and the best mofussil cow only gives one or two seers of milk a day. The calf is allowed to suck all day, but is tied up at night and the cow is milked as soon as the calf gets to her in the morning. Indian cows do not give milk until the calf has had a first pull.

Before the Muhammadan conquest Hindus never castrated bulls, but Muhammadans do it regularly. The bullock is worked in his fourth year and its average life is 12 years. A cow has its first calf in its fifth year and usually produces eight in all.

Buffaloes are used for carts and ploughs in all parts of the district, but chiefly near the Gāro Hills and in the Madhupur jungle. There are *bathans* where large herds are kept

in the east of the Netrakona subdivision, and they are well fed on the saccharum grasses of the *bils*. They cost Rs. 30 to 120 each. They are seldom fierce and are sometimes little bigger than cows.

Sheep are to be found here and there, and goats are everywhere plentiful. Fowls and ducks are kept in all Muhamadan households. Pigs are driven in big herds about the district, wherever an interval between the different crops gives special opportunities for grazing.

A certain amount of cattle disease is endemic, chiefly anthrax and foot and mouth disease. The District Board has a Veterinary Hospital at Mymensingh and employs nine Veterinary Assistants.

In Reynolds' time the Madhupur jungle was estimated to give an outturn of Rs. 10,000, and other forests in the Atia, Kāgmāri and Joānshahi parganas yielded another Rs. 5,000. About 300 square miles of the Madhupur jungle is now covered with trees, and it is the only forest extant. The chief tree is the *gazāri* or bastard *sāl*, and the Māhārājā of Nātor makes an income of about 5 lakhs out of the northern villages. The centre and the south belong to all the Atia landlords in common. The Board of Management has much to contend with in the selfishness of individual co-sharers, who are always encouraging the ryots of their 16-anna villages to encroach on the *ijmāli* lands. Small blocks of the forest are leased out to temporary *ijārādārs*, who have no interest in restocking the portions they have cut. Honey, wax, yams and thatching grass are among the subsidiary products of the jungle, which add considerably to the income of the zamindārs.

Forests.

## CHAPTER VI.

## NATURAL CALAMITIES.

EARTH-  
QUAKE OF  
1897.

THE earthquake of 1897 is a local landmark of time. It occurred on the 12th June 1897 at 5-11 P.M., local time, travelling from north-west to south-south-east and lasting for about a minute and a half. Many public buildings at Sadar including the Judge's house were wrecked, and very few of the two-storied or brick built houses belonging to zamindārs in the mofussil survived. Heavy damage was done to the permanent-way and bridges on the Dacca-Mymensingh Railway and traffic was suspended for about a fortnight. The loss of life was not great, but the loss of property has been estimated at fifty lakhs of rupees. The river communication of the district was seriously affected. In 1898 the Government of Bengal deputed an expert engineer to report on the condition of the rivers and to devise means for deepening the channels. He reported that the earthquake had accelerated the process of silting up, which was primarily due to the natural decay of the Brahmaputra, which had previously fed all the other rivers, and that no improvements which were possible at a reasonable cost could be permanent.

## CYCLONES.

The district is always liable to sudden storms of almost cyclonic intensity, which are usually more or less local in their path. In 1913 one of these storms demolished all the villages of Muktagācha, that fell in its course, and some 50 people were killed in one village alone. On the 19th April 1845 a storm blew down the walls of the jail and hospital. Tin roofs and jute godowns are always coming to grief, but as a rule the *kutcha* houses of the cultivators seem to escape in a marvellous way.

## FLOODS.

The people can never be seriously afraid of either flood or drought in sufficient quantity to threaten famine. There are usually more wet than fine days in April and May, and the *aus* and jute crops are more likely to suffer from standing in too much water than from drought. It is rare that there is not sufficient rain in July and August for transplanting the



*aman* crop, though, if planted late, this sometimes suffers from the rains stopping too early in September.

Floods due to heavy rainfall in Assam sometimes cause the rivers in Tangail and Bājitpur to flood their banks, with the result that some of the jute and *āus* cannot be reaped. But the people are prepared for this and the damage done is confined to small areas. The floods in 1915 were exceptional in their severity, and the distress caused on this occasion is probably the nearest parallel to that which resulted from the flooding of the Teesta in 1879, when the change in the course of the Brahmaputra began. Martin says that the floods were accompanied by a deluge which washed away half the people and cattle from the country near which the new channel ran.

Except in connection with *boro dhān* there is no irrigation. This crop is transplanted in the late autumn from seedling beds in all the shallower *bils* of the Kishorganj and Netrakona subdivisions and in some parts of Tangail, as soon as the water at the edge of the *bils* decreases to a depth of one or two feet. At this season the water dries up very rapidly, and it is necessary to irrigate the crop almost up to the time when it is ripe. It is done by dividing up the *bil* into terraces by *ails* of mud at short intervals and raising the water from the centre of the *bil* by means of a *kunt*. This is a kind of canoe 13 feet long, one foot broad and one foot deep, of which one end has been cut away. The other end faces the reservoir and moves up and down on a fulcrum. A bamboo over 20 feet long, fixed over the canoe and parallel to it, is weighted with earth and straw at the end furthest from the reservoir, so that unless pressed down by the foot of the operator the entire end remains poised over the water. The instrument is dipped into the reservoir, until a regular stream of water flows down the narrow channels, called *siri*, which are left between the *ails*. If the fields to be irrigated are a long way from the centre of the *bil* or deep *khāl*, which forms the reservoir, several *kunds* have to be used. One *kund* can only raise water 18 inches, but in the flat plains of Khaliājari and Bājitpur five or six *kunds* are sufficient to spread the water over many square miles.

IRRIGATION.

It is a good illustration of the conservatism of the country that Buchanan in 1809 gave an exact description of this instrument under the name of *jant*. He said that the labour required was disproportionate to the results, and suggested that the *yatan* as used in Madras could raise more water 8 to 10 feet from a well than a *jant* could raise it 18 inches. In

Malda the factories employ a kind of capstan machine, which, if adopted in this district, would greatly extend the cultivation of winter crops. The difficulty is the want of combination among the ryots, who could not easily be persuaded to work together to irrigate all their fields in turn. Protective banks have never been built to prevent the water running away from wide areas, but the smaller *khāls* in Tangail, Muktagācha, Nandāil and Netrakona are always *bunded* at the beginning of the cold weather to prevent the *bils* draining too rapidly. It is a dangerous problem interfering with any of these *khals* and *bils*, whether to deepen them or to *bund* them, for what benefits one village will almost certainly do corresponding damage to another.

## CHAPTER VII.

## RENTS, WAGES AND PRICES.

MYMENSINGH differs from the other districts in the division in that the great bulk of the land is held by a few big zamindārs. The most striking feature in the histories of these families is the large part played by adoption in providing heirs. Some of the largest estates are now owned by widow ladies. In spite of the low incidence of the revenue, the number of estates, whose solvency is beyond question, is strictly limited. It cannot be alleged as a reason for their indebtedness that the landlord class have a standard of living which is above their income. With few exceptions their dwelling and guest houses are unpretentious, their horses and carriages make no show, and they live in Indian style on the *bāzār* products of the country. At various times during the 19th century most of them have been absentees living in Calcutta. For a long time their rent rolls were sufficient for their needs, and they left the management of their estates in the hands of corrupt and inefficient *amlas*, who were at no pains to enhance the rents by gradual and legitimate enhancements, so long as they could line their own pockets with large sums in the way of *naṣar* and collection expenses and *abwābs*. Litigation has played its usual part in impoverishing the majority of the estates, as also the needs of a large body of useless hangers-on or poor relations. It seems certain that most of the income goes in petty expenditure of a wasteful and indefinite character, for which there is nothing to show. Few of the big landowners have really devoted any of their own time or interest to the economical management of their affairs—the late Māhārājā Surjya Kanta and the present Rājā of Rāmgopālpur and the Rānī of Santosh, 6 annas, being perhaps the only notable exceptions. The Māhārājā got a good start, as during his minority the estate was under the Court of Wards.

The land-  
lord class.

The Muhammadan families owe much of their prevailing obscurity and poverty to the subdivision of their estates among female heirs according to the Muhammadan Law of succession, and it is difficult to see what the future of these families can be or how their estates are to be administered at all. It

has taken the Settlement Department two years to unravel the proportionate share of the profits to which the various wards in the Karatia Estate are entitled, the different interests of the cousins in various estates and *patnis* having descended from the same ancestors in different ways. Their Hindu *amlas* have always cheated their masters and in the old days permanent tenures in the most valuable villages were alienated without sufficient consideration and appropriated as *Khārijā Tālūks* by influential servants. By this means the descendants of Isā Khān at Haibatnagar and Jangalbāri have lost much of their original property.

The  
middle  
class.

The bulk of the Hindu *bhadraloh* are themselves petty *tālūkdārs* and tenureholders, living in inaccessible villages in tin-roofed houses with wood or mat walls. Those who cannot live on the rents they collect whether in produce or cash take service with the zamindārs, each big estate having an enormous staff of ill-paid *nāibs* and *mohurrirs*, who know no English and have no real knowledge of business methods, but make up for their poor salaries by intriguing with ryots for their share of the *abwābs* and go-between fees. The professional classes are chiefly represented by the pleaders and *mukhteārs* at Sadar and Subdivisional head-quarters. There are also jute dealers and school masters, some doctors and chemists combined, a few contractors and the clerks working in the Government and District Board offices. There is no doubt that this class feels the pressure of the rise of prices, for their standard of living has been going up, while the cost of food, house rent, and travelling has increased inordinately. It is the marriages and education of their children for which this class is always getting into debt, and while no foreigner can help admiring the unselfishness of the parents who deny themselves all luxuries and many necessities to give their sons an education, which will bring them Government appointments, the tendency, which is seen in all classes to educate their sons a step higher than they have themselves reached, is responsible for the problem of the educated unemployed and the slow progress of commercial and industrial enterprise in Bengal.

It may cost a zamindār in a good position Rs. 40,000 to marry a daughter, and it costs a Hindu clerk on Rs. 40 or Rs. 50 about Rs. 400. School fees sound very low, but they mount up with boarding expenses, and private tuition is often required. No house in Mymensingh can be rented for less than Rs. 10 or Rs. 15 a month, and an officer on Rs. 150 may



have to pay Rs. 25 or Rs. 30. Travelling by train or by bicycle is cheap, but the cost of long journeys by *palki* or *tikka gari* is a great strain on the *bhadralok*, who have to take their families from place to place to visit relations or on transfer. The poorest pony 12 hands high cannot be bought under Rs. 80, and it is difficult to get carts at four annas a mile. In 1866 carts could be hired for from 12 annas to 14 annas a day and before that 8 annas was the regular rate.

The agriculturists are the really prosperous class as well as by far the most numerous. Practically all, including the *bargadārs*, have occupancy rights, and until the recent settlement all were cultivating a larger area than that for which they were paying rent. The average family certainly cultivates 3 to 4 acres, but the statistics are very misleading. A few big holdings of over 400 acres in Dewānganj bring the average up, but on the other hand there are many small holdings held by the same ryot in different villages or under the same or different landlords in the same village. Except in Patiladaha only one in 25 or 50 acres is sublet to under-ryots.

Fixed or lump rents are very much the exception, but the average rent bears the same low proportion to the profits, as the revenue of the zamindārs to their collections. In a very few villages there is one common rate, but in the great majority the land is classed as *Khod*, *Pālān*, *Awāl*, *Doyam* and *Chhiyam*. In the older Gazetteers it is stated that except in two parganas the rent is not based on the crop, but generally speaking the lands which are assessed highest in any village are those which grow the more valuable crop. In the eastern parganas *boro* lands carry the highest rate, in Alāpsingh jute lands, and in the jungle *āman* lands. It is a peculiarity of the district that *khod* or homestead land, even when extended at the expense of the profitable agricultural land, is always the most heavily rated, though still higher rents are paid occasionally for the *Pānbaraj* on which betel creepers are grown. The Bihar system by which homestead lands are *belagān*, or rent-free, seems fairer, especially as their superior value is in most cases due to the personal exertions of the ryots. A large *nazar* is paid by ryots excavating a tank, even when this is for the general benefit of the village and a sanitary necessity. In many cases in virtue of this sum of money down, the area of the tank is afterwards excluded from assessment.

For homesteads the highest rents are realised in Alāpsingh and Hosenshāhi, Rs. 7 or 8 being normal and Rs. 11 or 12



the maximum. In the eastern parganas the high lands are so rare as to command fancy rates in some cases. For agricultural land the ordinary rate is from Rs. 3-8 to 6 an acre all over the district. Cultivators holding under an intermediate tenureholder or under a resident *khārija tālukdār* pay a little more than those holding direct under a big landlord, and *korfā* ryots, or undertenants holding under an ordinary *jotedār*, pay almost double.

There are innumerable villages where no partition has taken place and the ryots hold under from 7—160 co-sharer landlords, who cannot combine to appoint a common manager or to make *ijmāli* collections. The result is that the smaller co-sharers do not find it pay to maintain a regular collecting establishment, but send an agent round once every three or five years to collect what he can. Arrears of rent are seldom collected and there are never any enhancements. This and the inaccuracy of all previous measurements help to account for the great difference between the nominal village rates and the actual amount found to be paid per acre, when the total rental is divided by the area under cultivation. The produce of an acre of land in the district may vary from Rs. 140 to 25 and the selling price from Rs. 400 to 150. It will be obvious therefore that the ryots' rent proper is one of the least important factors in his budget. This is borne out by the fact that in Iswarganj and Alāpsingh the rates of rent are as high as anywhere in the district, and the people are apparently the most prosperous. In Sherpur and Patilādaha the rates are low, but there is less certainty about the crops and the soil is sandy; consequently this is the only part of the district where in a normal year agricultural loans are ever wanted and where the burden of indebtedness is really heavy. In the Tangāil subdivision the people are distinctly poorer and less independent. This fact has nothing to do with the rent, because within the district limits of variation the maximum and minimum are often to be found in adjoining villages and estates in this subdivision. It is possibly due to the greater density of the population and the smaller size of the average holding.

The prosperity of the village apart from the fertility of the soil and its safety from inundations depends far more on the character of the *māthbars* and the conduct of the zamindāri *āmla* than on the nominal rent. In Tangāil especially the *āmla* are all powerful and collect double the rent in the form of collection expenses and other *abwābs*. In Jafarshāhi and

Alāpsingh villages the headmen oppose the *āmla* and make common cause with the villagers. Before a measurement and its accompanying enhancement can take place, the *māthbars* have to be approached and promised that their own rents will not be increased. This is secured by a substantial *anugraha kami* or lump deduction, which, added to the fact that their lands are never honestly measured, results in the rich men paying a much lower rate than their less influential neighbours.

Few of the *nāibs* get salaries of more than Rs. 30 a month and the muharrirs only eight or nine. This means that they are bound to supplement their pay in the same way as the *paiks* and *barkandazes*, who get Rs. 4 or 5 and are allowed to take from annas 4 to a rupee as well as daily *khoraṅki* from every person on whom they serve a notice. The number of *āmla* who have to be supported by the tenantry is enormously increased by the absurd complication and reduplication of the papers in which the accounts are kept. A new *chitha*, or a list of plots, with their four boundaries is drawn up with no regard to the order of the same plots in a previous *chitha*. Before the new *jamabandi* can be prepared, *khatians* have to be written out for each ryot showing the different plots of which he is in possession with their areas and rate. The land is divided into numerous classes which nobody not born and bred in the village can distinguish and verify, and each class has a different rate. Rent is calculated for each plot singly, not on the nearest *katha* to the nearest anna, but say on 1 *arha*, 2 *bhutas*, 3 *kathas*, 2 *karas*, 1 *kāg* and 17 *til* to the nearest *ganda* or pie. From the *jamabandi* a *jamawāsilbāki* is prepared whose 24 to 400 columns are sometimes written on paper three yards wide. This form shows the rent for each class of land separately with reductions and deductions for 20 different things such as *batta*, *izāfā*, *jalkar*, diluvion, which have had no practical application to the village for generations, and whose headings even the old *āmla* cannot interpret. The result of all these columns is that neither the *jamabandi* nor the *jamawāsilbāki* is of any use for collection purposes, a separate *talabbaki* paper has to be prepared for each ryot showing the total rent and arrears due and the kists in which he pays it. This is not kept in such a form that payments in several years can be shown in parallel columns. The whole thing has to be written afresh each year. Transfers are usually noted in separate papers called *gatāgat*, which are never linked up intelligently with the *jamabandi*. The *āmdani* or cash book,

Zamindari  
manage-  
ment.

showing payments as they are made, is the only register which could not be simplified threefold. The *kabuliyats* are also written in meaningless stereotyped language at four times the necessary length. As a consequence when a landlord sues for increased rent under section 105, the collection papers of one village have to be brought in a cart and kept in the record room in tin trunks large enough to accommodate all the luggage of a passenger on a P. & O. liner. One of the greatest boons the district settlement can confer on the landlords will be any influence its records may have in causing them to rewrite their collection papers on its basis.

According to the landlords' papers rent is usually payable in 4 or 12 *kists*. As a matter of fact the ryots pay when they like without regard to the interest which is added for *kists* in arrears. Nearly all rent comes in after the principal crop is cut, jute in the west, *boro dhan* in the east, and *āman* paddy in the north.

Some of the big landlords, especially along the banks of the Jamuna, make as large an income out of *nazar*, or money charged for transfers and new settlements, as out of the rent proper. This is usually 25 per cent. or 50 per cent. of the purchase money paid by the transferee. Though holdings are nominally not transferable in the district, the buying and selling of whole or partial holdings goes on freely. The landlord is never asked for his permission beforehand, but sooner or later the purchaser pays the *nazar* and has his name substituted in the landlords' collection papers as the holder of the jote. Often this transaction does not take place till 3 or 10 years after the sale deed or *kawāla* has been registered.

There are 36 Registration offices in Mymensingh and the number of deeds registered rose from 120,150 in 1907 to 162,071 in 1915. About 80 per cent. of these deeds are sales of ryoti holdings or mortgages. The number goes up in time of scarcity but an increase spread over a long term is certainly not due to agricultural depression. Many of the sales are not to *mahājans* but to other ryots, and are due to temporary indebtedness caused by special extravagance, *e.g.* litigation and marriages.

#### Prices.

The price of all agricultural produce has risen enormously in recent years. Only 8 or 10 years ago the price of jute was Rs. 5—7 a maund, and of rice Rs. 2-8. Until the outbreak of the war jute was selling at Rs. 12 to 15, and rice at Rs. 5 a maund. Straw costs Rs. 5 to 7 a cartload, whereas 10 or 15 years ago it could be had for nothing, and the fowls, vegetables

fruit, eggs, milk and other farmyard produce, which are taken to the local *hāts* in exchange for the oil, clothes, and luxuries in which an ordinary ryot indulges, have all doubled in money value in the last 15 years. The following list gives some index to the change in money value of some of the main products :—

	1811.	1840.	1901.	1915.
	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.	Rs. A.
Common rice ...	1 0	1 6	3 4	6 4 a maund.
Wheat ...	0 8	2 8	5 0	8 4 a maund.
Mustard oil ...	0 2	0 2	0 7	0 10 a seer.
Jute ...	...	1 8	5 0	8 0 a maund.
Ghee ...	0 6	1 0	1 8	2 4 a seer. before the war, 12 to 15

In 1794 the Emperor made an allowance of 7 annas a day for the maintenance of the family of a respectable Muhammadan Sheikh called Fuzzullalla. In 1839 it was possible to contract to feed 32 prisoners for Re. 1 a day, whereas it now costs Rs. 8. Wages have increased in much the same proportion. In 1814 the Collector writes that "the wages of a cooly was one anna per diem and this was more than that description of people receive in the Mafassil". In 1832 their wages were Rs. 3 a month and up to 1901 not more than 5 annas per diem, whereas now 8 annas a day is the minimum and in the jute *godowns* they earn Re. 1 to Rs. 2. Agricultural labourers living with their masters have not yet risen beyond Rs. 48 a year with their food, but garden coolies and grass cutters and *punkhawalas* expect from Rs. 11 to 9.

In the meantime it cannot be said that the necessities or even the luxuries of the ryot, who grows enough *dhān* for his own consumption, have increased to anything like the same standard. He is still content with a collection of small huts surrounded by a fence of bamboo matting or jute sticks, with a very minimum of clothes, and the boats, agricultural implements, and food of his forefathers. The tin lamps, the earthenware pots, the wooden *hookahs*, the two penny half penny ornaments and toys which he brings back from the *hāt*, are all of the most tawdry and cheap manufacture. No doubt he spends more on umbrellas, medicines, crockery and cooking vessels than his



Material  
condition  
of the  
culti-  
vators.

grandfather. But these are small items, and there is no sign that the tin-roofed houses and roomy guest houses, which are conspicuous in every village, date from very recent years. Now that cultivation has extended so much, the use of tin instead of thatching grass is really an economy. No more money is spent on wells and tanks than in the past, and only the absolute improvidence of the people and their fondness for litigation can account for the great majority not being out of debt as the result of the inflated prices of the last few years. The one thing of real importance to the cultivator, that has gone up in price corresponding with agricultural produce, is labour. Unfortunately the Muhammadan cultivator is born lazy, and pride prevents even the poorest of them from doing any earth work or manual labour, which is not strictly a part of agriculture. The Muhammadan peasant considers himself a gentleman, and this would be to his credit, if it did not mean that even to measure his own field with a chain is derogatory. When the Settlement Operations were in progress, khalasies had to be imported from Hazāribāgh to carry the Kanungos' plane table from field to field at *bujharat*. When a ryot thinks that the level of his field is unsatisfactory or that an *ail* requires heightening, or there is a new plinth to be built, he hires up-country labourers to remove the necessary earth at 12 annas or Re. 1 a day.

It is this laziness and false pride that has prevented the inhabitants of Mymensingh from taking full advantage of the vast inflow of money into the district during the last few years. They now employ labourers from outside districts to cut their paddy, to steep their jute and to carry it to market. It is the cost of the labour, which they used to do themselves, that is solely responsible for increasing the cost of cultivation.

Indebted-  
ness.

How far the burden of debt lies on the agricultural population and how far it is still increasing is a difficult problem. The Settlement Officer of Dacca has collected statistics according to which the average indebtedness is Rs. 21 per head in those parts of Dacca, which border on Mymensingh. Possibly the figures are misleading, and it is doubtful if 70 per cent. of the ryots are seriously in debt. They are so improvident, that they think it natural and proper to be in debt to some extent, and they will take all the advances at 24 per cent. interest that the *mahājan* will give them. Generally speaking they do not realise how costly their short loans at monthly interest are; they look upon the *mahājan* as the friend, who comes to their aid when they are in temporary



difficulties, and their promises to him come before the rent or any other claims, when a new crop is harvested. The *mahājan* on his side cares chiefly for his interest, he has always as many demands as his capital will sustain, and he is not anxious to sell up his clients and to claim their lands. When he does buy up an occupancy holding on a money decree, he usually resettles it with the owner at an increased rent. Occasionally he insists on a produce rent. Only in Dewānganj and parts of Tangāil has an appreciable proportion of the land passed into the hands of non-agriculturist money lenders. Produce-paying tenants are not as numerous as in Dacca. There are very few, who pay a fixed weight of paddy or jute; the great majority are *bargadārs* paying half or one-third of the produce, whatever it may be.

On the whole it does not appear that this system has been a source of serious abuse in this district. Nearly all the *bargadārs* have jote lands of their own. They employ their surplus ploughs in cultivating the land of widow neighbours or of those who have lost their cattle. If the owner wishes to oust them, there are always others glad to give them new lands on the same terms. On the other hand there are many who have cultivated the same lands on these terms for generations, like the ryot in Tangāil who had ploughed one field for 30 years but agreed to absent himself during the settlement season on the promise that he would get the land back after attestation was over. They are an unambitious class and apparently quite content with the profits they get. Generally speaking the *bargadārs* and their landlords are on good terms, and it would be a mistake to advertise the right of commutation, which has never been claimed in this district since the Tenancy Act was passed.

The only part of the district, where the question of produce rent has really been a problem is with the Hajong tenants of Susung round about Durgapur. This is the only pargana where rents in fixed quantities of paddy are common, and the usual figure of from 6 to 10 maunds an acre is considerably heavier than the highest cash rent. All the same they are rents which the tenants are well able to pay, and for which they have usually contracted with their eyes open from the beginning. Sometimes, however, cash rents have been changed into produce rents in defiance of the principle of section 29 of the Tenancy Act.

Produce  
rents.

One thing, however, is quite certain. The *bargadars*, though often they get their seeds from the landlord and occasionally

also their ploughs, nowhere approach the condition of labourers, though that term is sometimes used in their *kabuliyats*. They are exactly of the same stamp and status as their fellow cultivators on cash rents, and would laugh at any one who seriously classed them with the labourers they themselves employ to cut their paddy or to do earthwork.

To return to the representative Mymensingh cultivator with a holding of 6 to 10 acres, considering his wants and knowledge, his material condition can only be described as prosperous. He grows enough paddy to feed his whole family for at least nine months of the year and the sale-proceeds of his jute are sufficient after purchasing paddy for the remaining months to pay his rent, the yearly wages of one farm servant, and the interest on his debts. His own cows supply the family with milk, because it is not considered dignified for a Muhammadan to sell milk. Vegetables and certain kinds of fruit like cocoanuts, plantains and jack fruit grow in abundance in almost every *bāri*. There are few villages where at least in some months of the year every villager cannot catch his own fish in the nearest *bil* or ditch. There is no objection to fishing with rod or basket even in reserved fisheries, and the villagers have the right to fish all shallow *bils* twice a week free even in the *Khaliājuri* area, where *jalkar* is the chief source of revenue.

The climate of Bengal does not seem to punish its people for living in wet clothes or lying on damp beds. To a European the village *bāri* with its attached cowsheds, surrounded on all sides by bamboos and trees and the irregular water-logged ditches from which the earth has been taken for the plinths of the houses, must seem the height of dank discomfort. The native seems quite pleased with it, because the richest makes no attempt at improvement in any of these respects. His house is at least waterproof, and there are few which have not a big *baithakkhana*, where the men sit and talk in the evening and receive guests. The furniture consists of wooden *taktas* or platforms, some mats, a few stools and occasionally chairs. There is always a sufficiency of brass utensils for cooking and for drinking water, and the rafters of the roof take the place of cupboards, just as strings fastened to the mat walls take the place of shelves. The supply of *dhān* is kept in big baskets, or in separate round godowns raised from the ground on short wooden piles.

The Muhammadan ryot has therefore enough food, shelter, and leisure to be happy, and the biweekly *hāt* gives him all the social excitement he requires. It is only for fuel and for fodder

for his cattle that he experiences some difficulty as the result of the recent extension of cultivation. The Madhupur jungle covers all the centre of the district, and there are few villages where the cultivators cannot find some jungly patches from which to gather firewood. Cowdung is, however, the common resource. That grazing lands have become so scarce is the ryot's own fault. He ties his cattle on the roads and *hālats* and in the fields, as soon as the crop is cut, and, if the supply of straw falls short, he does not mind if the cattle suffer.

His children get all the exercise and amusement they want, playing in the fields and the tanks and ditches. The eastern villages, however, are for six months in every year islets in a huge sea, resting on a foundation of earth and bamboo extensions, and packed to overflowing with men, women, children, and domestic animals. Here life must be wearisome in the extreme. Every hut touching another is a separate *bāri*, and there are no courtyards in between. The women and children, who cannot go out in boats for their daily work, get no exercise at all, and their tempers and morals suffer accordingly. In all parts of the district, those who are ill must suffer unnecessarily, for though all classes in India are willing to nurse their own kin most devotedly, medical and sanitary knowledge are absolutely lacking, and doctors and dispensaries and modern medical comforts are usually far away.

As a conclusion to this chapter it may be interesting to give the budget of two representative families.

A—Superintendent of a zamindāri estate in Kishorganj keeps up two establishments one at Tāljangā, consisting of himself and two servants, and another at Rauha, where his wife, mother, daughter, one nephew and one servant reside. One nephew is at school at Kishorganj, where he lives with a relation.

*Income.*

			Rs.	A.
Salary at Rs. 75	...	...	900	0
30 maunds of paddy, the rent of 4 acres of land given out in barga	...	...	90	0
Nazar, etc.	...	...	300	0
Total			1,290	0

*Expenditure.*

		Rs.	A.
School expenditure, including books for the nephew at Kishorganj at Re. 5 per month			
		60	0
Clothing—42 <i>dhoties</i> at Re. 1-2 each	...	47	4
6 <i>saries</i> at Rs. 2 each	...	12	0
Other clothing	...	30	0
3 pairs of shoes	...	18	0
3 umbrellas	...	3	0
Food—			
Rice, 48 maunds, at Rs. 5-8	...	264	0
Pulses, 10 maunds, at Rs. 5-8	...	55	0
Fish, Rs. 4 per month	...	48	0
Mustard oil for rubbing and consumption, 10 seers per month	...	80	0
Spices, Rs. 2 per month	...	24	0
Vegetables, Rs. 2-8 per month	...	30	0
Salt, 8½ seers per month	...	9	0
Fuel at Rs. 2-8 per month	...	30	0
Milk at Rs. 12 per month	...	144	0
Sugar, sweets and fruit	...	30	0
Lighting—Kerosine oil at Rs. 2-8	...	30	0
Servants' wages, 3 at Rs. 4	...	144	0
Rent to landlord	...	24	0
Medicine	...	20	0
Pujas and other religious observances	...	50	0
Travelling	...	30	0
Total	...	1,182	4

**A Muhammadan family of 16 members.***Source of Income.*

880 rupees of produce, and profits on jute trading of about Rs. 500

Total income	...	Rs. 1,380
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*Expenditure.*

	Rs.	A.
<i>Dhoties</i> of 5 adult males, 30 at Re. 1-2 each	33	12
<i>Do.</i> for 5 boys, 20 at 10 annas each	12	8
<i>Chadars</i> for summer wear for 5 adults at 10 annas each	3	2
<i>Chadars</i> for winter wear for 5 adults and 5 boys at Rs. 3	30	0
<i>Gamchas</i> (long country towels) for 5 adults and 5 boys, 2 each, 4 annas	5	0



	Rs.	A.
<i>Kurtas</i> , one for each male member, except infants, 10 at Re. 1	10	0
Caps	2	10
<i>Saries</i> for mother, 5 at Re. 1-4	6	4
<i>Do.</i> for 3 wives (eight for each) at Re. 1-8	36	0
Umbrella and miscellaneous items	9	0
School fees for 2 boys	12	0
Books and stationery	6	0
(boys attend the local primary school).		
5 tins of kerosine oil at Rs. 2-4	11	4
Rent and <i>chaukidari</i> tax	37	0
Religious observances, <i>e.g.</i> , <i>Īds</i> and for sacrifice of animals at <i>Bakrids</i>	25	0
Rice, 15 seers per day, at Rs. 5-8	752	8
<i>Dāl</i> , 15 maunds in the year, at Rs. 7-8 per maund	112	8
Oil (mustard), 2 maunds	42	0
Salt, 2 maunds in the year, at Rs. 3	6	0
Spices, 2 seers per month, at 6 annas	9	0
Onions, 10 seers per month, at 3 annas	22	8
Sweets and confectionery at Rs. 2 per month	24	0
Tobacco, 2 maunds a year, at Rs. 7	14	0
<i>Pān supāri</i> at Rs. 2 per month	24	0
Festivities, guests, etc.	30	0
Cattle and agricultural implements	100	0
Total	1,376	0



## CHAPTER VIII.

## OCCUPATION AND TRADES.

ACCORDING to the Census of 1911, out of a population of 4,326,422, 84 per cent. are dependent on agriculture and  $2\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. on fishing. These are the main occupations of the natives of Mymensingh; nearly all the coolies and domestic servants are up-country men, the professional boatmen mostly hail from Dacca, and there are no manufactures of importance.

The rest of the population falls mainly under the following classifications :—

1. Cotton, jute and other textile industries	...	30,300
2. Trade in textiles, hides, etc.	...	28,000
3. Oil manufactures	...	23,300
4. Grocers and sellers of oil	...	29,500
5. Fish dealers	...	20,000
6. Money lenders	...	17,000
7. Rent receivers	...	20,200
8. Professions	...	4,500

Except among the Gāros and Hajongs the occupation of the women of the district is confined to the domestic duties, including the feeding of the cattle, husking the paddy, and fetching water from the tank or well. They do not work in the fields or go to market, and seldom touch the jute.

Jute has been treated in the Chapter on Agriculture. There are machines at Sārisabāri, Bhairab, Mymensingh and other important centres for pressing it into bales for easier carriage to Calcutta, but otherwise it undergoes no manufacturing process in this district. Early in the 19th century *pāt* was woven into cloth by low caste Hindu women in Dinājpur. It was used for bedding, for covering bales of cloth, and for rice and sugar bags. If the annual outturn exceeded one lakh, as Buchanan says, it is obvious that it cannot have been unknown in this district. Until the failure of indigo the local people grew enough merely to make ropes for their boats, houses and cattle.

Between 1800 and 1860 there must have been 40 to 50 indigo factories in the district. In 1873 there were only three left. As is shown in Sir J. P. Grant's minute on the Indigo Commission Report of 1859, the market price of the manufactured article (Rs. 10 for 2 seers or the outturn of one bigha) did

not allow the planter to pay for the raw material more than a third of what the cultivator could get by growing rice in low-lying villages, and in the richer districts of Bengal like Jessore and Nadia the ryot was actually losing Rs. 7 a bigha. In Bengal, also, the cultivators were more difficult to deal with than in Bihar. So long ago as 1820 Buchanan wrote about the difficulties of indigo planters in Eastern Bengal :—

“They had to give up cultivating the plant owing to the frauds and extortions to which every man cultivating on a large scale in this country must be exposed. Each ryot will only grow a small quantity, so even for 100 maunds of indigo the area of cultivation must be widespread. The ryots will not cultivate it without advances nearly the value of the expected crop, and having received the money they are careless about the cultivation, and the ploughing, sowing, and weeding have all to be watched by the planters with the result that there are endless disputes in spite of the detailed agreements that are always drawn up in writing. The Mandals receive the advances and distribute to smaller ryots getting a commission on the crop.

“The causes of ill-feeling in the indigo districts is attributed by the ryots to the manufacturers treating them as slaves after they have once taken advances and refusing to allow them to repay balances and relinquish cultivation. Also to his servants cheating them in the measure of the land and the measure of the weed. They also complained that the whole produce did not equal in value the rent, which the zamindārs heighten out of spite.

“The zamindārs said the manufacturers were so insolent and violent that no respectable family could live near them and they encouraged the ryots not to pay rent.

The planters defended themselves by saying that the zamindārs hated the authority as members of the ruling caste which they enjoyed with the lower natives and could not make their usual illegal extortions.”

Buchanan's conclusion is that Europeans were not perfectly subject to the Courts of Law and that fresh licenses should be refused, as it was not politic that British subjects should be put on the same footing with the natives. Europeans who are not responsible to the Company for their conduct should have their business restricted to the principal seaports.

Regulation V of 1830 was the result of several big failures in Calcutta. It made the evasion by a ryot of his indigo contract punishable by a Magistrate, but it was rescinded in 1835. This

left the planter with no remedy except physical force or the Civil Court, if the ryots after taking advances refused to grow any plant, and experience showed that both remedies were insufficient when the ryots could rely on the assistance of the landlords. Very few of the planters had kept any lands in their *khas* possession, so they could not eke out their profits by growing country crops like their rivals in Bihar. They therefore sold their interest in the land to the neighbouring zamindārs.

Indigo could be grown with greater profit compared with other crops on *char* lands, and perhaps this is why the grievances of the ryots did not lead to any serious disturbances in this district. The ryots of Char Algi near Gafargāon look on the indigo days as a golden age, when they paid practically no rent and were allowed to grow their own crops on all but the 3 or 4 annas of the village area in the *char*, which they cultivated with indigo for Mr. J. P. Wise.

The only traces of the industry that now remain are a few ruins, chiefly of vats, at Baiganbāri, Bhelamūri, Dewānganj and other riverside factories. The names of the planters, Wise, Kallonas, and Brodie will always live in the names of the big *tālūks* in Hosenshāhi and Alāpsingh parganas.

#### Oil Mills.

Mustard oil is now the most wide spread manufacture in the district. There is a colony of Telis or Muhammadan Kulus in many roadside villages. The *ghāni* or mill is worked by a bullock inside a shed and, but for the creaking noise when it is working, its presence would never be suspected. In Kishorganj Namasudras are employed to draw the mills. These consist of five parts, the *gachh* or foundation, the *naipat* or tube in which the *jait* or log revolves, the *joal* or yoke and the *katli* or capstan-like lever which is pulled by the bullock. The *jait* has to be renewed every month and the total cost is Rs. 20. Three-tenths of the seed used is the average produce in oil, and it takes six days to crush 3 maunds. If the seed is not the property of the Teli he gets one-third of the oil and the cake as the price of his labour.

#### Sugar.

Sugar is another industry which is more properly treated under agriculture. The sugarcane is crushed into juice by wooden or iron machines worked by a single bullock, and the juice is converted into *gur* by boiling. There is no manufacture of sugar from *gur*.

Cotton is largely cultivated on the borders of the Gāro Hills and also in the Madhupur jungle. The Gāros have a simple machine called *charki* for passing the cotton through two

highly polished bamboo rods, moved by a handle, which separate the seed. About 80 per cent. is sold in an uncleaned state and shipped to Narāyanganj. Some of it is made into *rezais* and pillows in the district. Cleaned cotton fetches Rs. 20 to 25 a maund and the other Rs. 6 to 9. The Gāros, Hajangs and other low castes still weave their own coarse clothes on primitive looms, which are set up in the compounds of their houses and worked by the women and boys. There are also families of Hindu Tantis and Jugis and of Muhammadan Julahas scattered all over the district, especially in Tangāil and Fulpur, who make *gamchas* for the market. The material is cotton imported from England. The District Board is doing its best to keep the industry alive with a school for weavers at Tangāil.

The East India Company had cloth factories at Kishorganj and Bājitpur. In the middle of the 19th century Kishorganj and Bājitpur and also the other Bājitpur in Tangāil produced embroidered *sāris* of a high quality. *Sāris* from Bājitpur in the Kishorganj subdivision still find a ready market in Calcutta. The Kishorganj *tanzeb* was as prized as the Dacca muslin. Muslin is still manufactured by some 40 families in Bājitpur and sold in Dacca, but the material used is entirely English yarn and there is now no trace of cotton growing in the locality except the names of such villages as Kapasātia.

Weaving.

The process of cleaning cotton for the finished thread by means of a *dullum*, a roller, which in Mymensingh was manipulated by foot, is described at length by Taylor in his Topography of Dacca, 1840. Also the spinning of the thread by women so fine that 115 miles only weighed one pound. The resulting muslins were much better than those woven from English yarn of an equal tenuity, but the spinners even in his day used 80 per cent. of the latter, not only on account of its cheapness but because it took so long to search for sufficient quantities of the hand-made article of the same quality and size and appearance at the village *hāts*.

The industry has died out because no market can be found for these home-made products. One of the few Kishorganj weavers still working gets Re. 1-4 for a *tanzeb* which it takes three days to make and the material costs 9 annas.

Coarse bamboo mats and baskets are manufactured in most villages and the finer *sitalpati* mats made from a particular reed that grows in the marshes of Tangāil and Kishorganj are known even in Calcutta. Patitas, a low caste of Hindus, make mats of *muttra*. *Hogla* mats made out of the reed called after

the village of that name are common north of the Brahmaputra. In Char Iswardia, just opposite Mymensingh, 75 families make a special cane box which is very popular. There used to be a considerable industry in paper until the cheapness of the machine-made substitute ruined the home-made article. In 1870 it was being made from jute in Atia, and there is a village called Kāgazigrām near Astagram of which all the inhabitants were paper makers.

Dairy  
produce.

The so-called Dacca cheese is made on the bank of the Dhanu at Itna and other places. It is exported in considerable quantities. It is a kind of hard cream cheese made in balls like the common Dutch variety with a fairly strong, but not unpleasant, taste. The splendid grazing afforded in the cold weather by the luxuriant beds of *dhub* grass in the Joānshāhi and Khālajurī parganas, areas which are flooded for seven months in the year, attracts large herds of cattle from the western villages. Milk costs one anna a big seer and *ghee* is largely produced from the surplus.

Charcoal is extensively manufactured at Gabtali on the main road from Mymensingh to Tangail, where it enters the Madhupur jungle.

Tobacco leaf is mixed with its own weight of treacle (*lālī* or *rāb*) by the consumer or by low caste Hindus and Muhammadans, who sell it in little black cakes. The richer people buy Rangpur tobacco in the bazārs, they do not smoke the Mymensingh-grown weed.

Metal  
industries.

Manufactures from metals are limited in the district. It is said that iron was originally found in the Madhupur jungle and in the Dacca portions traces of smelting operations have been found. Brass has been used for a long time for the cooking utensils, water pots, plates and glasses of the more conservative classes. The material is procured from Calcutta in sheets and hammered, not moulded into shape. The Islāmpur and Kāgmāri bell-metal ware is the most finished and most expensive, but there are villages in every *thānā* where the braziers sit night and day in the same open hut till they fall asleep with the hammer in their hands. The price of the finished vessels is Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 a seer.

In 1870 the number of blacksmiths in the district was estimated at 2,430 with 659 forges. It is not likely that the number has much increased, for the trade is most conservative. They make ploughshares, nails and the common agricultural implements like *dāos* and *hāsulis*. *Kodālis* or spades are chiefly imported from England, and so are scissors, razors,



knives and the carpenter's tools. The bellows used are really ingenious, but, like the boats and irrigating instruments of the district, they were exactly the same one century ago and perhaps ten. The only new industry is the manufacture of steel trunks painted in gaudy colours which are so conspicuous in the shops of Mymensingh and Netrakona. Tinsmiths in the same shops also make lamps, chiefly from empty kerosine tins. It is impossible to imagine what people did without these tins when only local vegetable oils were in use. Besides providing receptacles for paint, lime, grain and all sorts of other commodities, they are made into furniture, roofs and walls of houses, and boats.

Goldsmiths and silversmiths are particularly numerous in Netrokona. Like the braziers they seem to work all the 24 hours. Their resources are so limited and their designs so clumsy, that it is strange how much they are patronised. For work in gold they are paid Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 6 a tola and for silver 4 annas to 8 annas. The gold is usually provided by melting down sovereigns. Shakharihs at Kishorganj make shell bangles, but the best kinds come from Dacca and cost Rs. 3 to Rs. 50 a pair. The beads used by Hindu mendicants and others are imported. Those made from the seeds of the *rudraksha* come from Benares and those of *tulsi* from Navadwip.

There is no industry in dyes. The pigments used by the potters and Achārjyas who make the clay and straw images, which adorn the Kalibūri of every important village and also the wayside shrines, are imported from Dacca. The best quality of *sindur*, which is used by Hindu wives to mark their foreheads, comes from China.

Gunpowder is manufactured by a man of Portuguese extraction in Hosēnpur bazār. In all *thānās* there are families of Muhammadans who make fireworks and bombs.

There are carpenters in all towns, who make the furniture and doors of houses, the wooden parts of ploughs, stools, beds and almirahs. Boats are also made on the banks of all the rivers and *khāls* in the eastern *thānās*. These boats possess very fine lines which have descended from countless generations. They are very safe, and usually very clean, but their accessories are of the most extraordinary primitiveness. The rudders are entirely separate and tied on with rope; they are used for propulsion as well as for steering; the oars are bamboos with any shaped piece of wood tied on for a blade; the rulloek is non-existent, or consists of two pieces of bamboo thrust into the gunwale, so that the oar may be tied against

Boat  
building

the one which stands most upright. The position of the rower is so cramped and high above the water, that it is impossible to get any real leverage on the oars. The ordinary trading boat which carries jute and rice and pots from village to village will carry from 60 to 150 maunds, is 20 feet long, 7 feet broad and draws 18—30 inches of water.

Fishing boats are of all sizes and shapes from the 40 feet long *othar*, with only one-third of its keel in the water and both the bow and the stem rising high into the air, to the unwieldy dug out and the cockle shell punt.

The carpenter's tools consist of a *bāyis* or hatchet costing Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2-8, *bāsuli* or adze 12 annas, *batali* or chisel 7 annas, *rāndā* or plane 7 annas, *korāt* or saw Re. 1-9, and a *turpun*, an ingenious drill worked with a bow and string, 4 annas. They never use a carpenter's bench or a vice, but sit on the floor holding the wood on which they are working with their toes.

#### Potters.

Potters' hamlets are numerous throughout the district. As a rule the clay costs them nothing. Besides all sorts of cooking utensils, *gāchhas* (stands for kerosine lights), *dābas* and *kalkis* for pipes, they make big troughs for storing rice and feeding cattle and rings for *kutchā* wells.

The potter's wheel is a wooden plate about 9 inches square with solid arms protruding at each corner. To these is affixed a heavy rim, 4 or 5 inches in diameter, of earthenware mixed with straw and jute. The centre is mounted on a wooden pivot about 9 inches long. A piece of stone with a hole in it for the pointed end of the pivot to stand on is firmly embedded into the ground. The operator then sits on one side and keeps the wheel in a horizontal position by placing his left hand near the central plate, and sets it into motion by turning the rim clockwise with his right hand. After the wheel has once been set in motion, the hands are taken off and the motion is accelerated by turning the wheel with a bamboo stick placed against a spoke. When the wheel is going at its utmost speed, the operator touches the flat cake of clay on the central plate, which had hardly been noticed before, with his fingers, and as by magic a high cylinder appears, which gradually assumes the different girths of the familiar *kalsi* or water pot. The larger vessels have all to be moulded by hand.

The kiln or *puin* is a concave platform on the ground with a sudden cavity in the centre for the furnace. This furnace is connected by a passage with the open air and all the rest of the circular platform is piled round with the pots that are to be

baked, and roofed with a platform of bamboos and earth. Each layer of pots is covered with firewood and straw, and when the earthen crust gets too hard, holes are made to allow of the exit of smoke. The colour of the pots depends on the time they are left in the kiln and the extent to which the smoke is allowed to escape.

There is a great consumption as in the last days of six of the Pengali months all the earthenware cooking utensils of a Hindu family have to be changed, and when a family goes into mourning a new pot has to be used for each meal of rice. Boatloads of these manufactures are hawked about the villages all through the year and at 3 annas to 8 annas a pot a cargo may realise Rs. 250.

Darzis are all Muhammadans and their sewing machines are to be seen in every bazār. Barbers are Hindus with a few exceptions in Jamālpur. They are now taking to soap in shaving but not to hot water, and the lowest fee for a shave is one pice. They chiefly carry on their trade in *hāts*, where their takings are Rs. 2 a day. They have to attend to customers of all classes so those who have caste pride confine themselves to the houses of the richer people.

The shells which are to be found in every flooded field, chiefly but not always those of large snails, used to be collected for burning into lime. Now that Sylhet lime is available this industry has come to an end except with a few families in Kāgmāri.

The pearl fishery has suddenly risen into importance at Bangalpārā near Astagrām on account of the find of a pearl for which the fisherman was paid Rs. 200 on the spot by a dealer. A Dacca merchant paid Rs. 800 a few days later and it is said that the same pearl has since been sold in Calcutta for Rs. 22,000. Mussels are collected by fishermen along the banks of the rivers especially in Bil-Mashka, and any one who likes may search 100 for 4 annas. Most of the pearls are of a rather dark pink colour.

Bricks are made by up-country coolies, usually working under foreign contractors. When a bridge or road is contemplated, the previous season has to be devoted to acquiring a brickfield and importing the coal, the next to burning the bricks. Suitable clay seem to be available in most places. In the old days the local people must have made their own bricks, though it is said that the mould was not known until introduced by Europeans. The bricks used in the old indigo factories and

temples and mosques are very solid though not so large as those used in the indigo factories of Rājshāhi.

Although the Muchis dry the skins of cattle and goats, they are exported from the district in a very unfinished state. There is nothing to show that boots or shoes were ever manufactured in this district, as Puchanan describes in Dinājpur, where a man and wife could turn out 8 pairs a month at 8 annas each. In Sherpur, Jamālpur and Uchākhilā a certain amount of local leather is made into cheap shoes. Drums are manufactured on a great scale in one or two Kishorganj villages.

Fishing.

About one-fortieth of the people of the district are professional fishermen, chiefly belonging to the Kaibartta and Jhālo castes. Good caste Muhammadans are not supposed to deal in fish. The selling price of the fish caught in the *bils* and rivers of the Khālīajurī and Joānshāhi parganas in the east of the district is calculated at 5 lakhs, in the Meghna, at Rs. 70,000, in the Jamuna at Rs. 1,60,000, in the Brahmaputra at Rs. 50,000 and in the smaller rivers and *bils* in the interior it cannot be less than another 4 lakhs. Of the total of 12 lakhs, 40 per cent. goes to the landlords and the non-fishing *ijāradārs* and 30 to the fishermen and 30 to the intermediaries or *nikāris* who sell it in the bazārs.

The fishing trade employs a large number of people besides the fishermen, who seldom deal with the public direct. The fish are sold from the boat to a *nikāri* who conveys them by boat to the nearest land *nikāri*, whose business it is, again at a commission, to carry them to market. At Gurai or Dīghirpār in the early dawn the boats are met by gangs of coolies who carry the fish in baskets to Bājītpur (7 miles) or Katiādi (17 miles). Other boats come to Nilganj, and the fish is carted to Kishorganj (6 miles), or to Nandāil, whence it is carried to Bālipārā (12 miles) and thence perhaps to Mymensingh and other places by railway. It is no wonder that with the risks of this journey in the hot sun in baskets which are never cleaned of the scales of previous consignments and which smell horribly however fresh the contents, a *rohī* fish which realised 12 annas to Re. 1 at the *khola* fetches Rs. 3 to 4 at Nandāil and Rs. 6 to 8 at Mymensingh.

On the smaller rivers the usual arrangement is for the fisherman to pay one to five rupees a boat to the *ijāradār*, who leases the block from the landlord of the adjoining village. *Māthbars* of the fishing caste usually take up the *ijārā* of *bils*. To do this in the eastern parganas requires quite a fair amount of capital. There can be no permanent villages in these flooded



areas, so at the beginning of each cold weather 40 male labourers must be imported and a row of huts called a *kholā* erected for them and their families on the bank of the *khāl* or *bīl*, which is to be the scene of their operations for the season. Each male gets Rs. 80 on the average for the season and each female, who cuts up and dries the fish that cannot be carried to market fresh, Rs. 40. A fleet of 15 boats is maintained. Brushwood for the *khēos* has to be brought from Ajmiriganj, the landlords' agents have to be feed to prevent loot, and the nets will cost about Rs. 1,000. A *darījāradār's* annual account at one of the Khālīajurī *kholās* may therefore work out as follows :—

			Rs.
40 male labourers	...	...	3,200
25 females	...	...	1,000
Bamboos for 25 <i>khēos</i>	...	...	500
Puja expenses	...	...	100
House accommodation, etc.	...	...	400
Nets, <i>khēojāl</i> , 40 pieces	...	...	800
„ <i>othār</i> , 2, at Rs. 100	...	...	200
„ <i>jhāki</i> , 10, at Rs. 15	...	...	150
Boats, <i>sarangās</i> , 15, at Rs. 30	...	...	450
<i>Othār</i> , 2, at Rs. 200	...	...	400
Total	...	...	7,200

Depreciation on both nets and boats must be calculated at 40 per cent., so with Rs. 1,600 paid to the *ijāradār* the annual expenses are Rs. 7,600. He makes about Rs. 500 from small fishermen for the right to fish with *chānda* and *jhāki* nets. He is supposed to make a profit of from 26 to 60 per cent., but there is always a risk that the *bīl* may have become exhausted. One Tāra Chand Mālo of Khālīajurī lost all his capital on the Chhandania *bīl* and gave it up. Two years later, nobody having taken it up in the meantime, he borrowed Rs. 10,000 and made a profit of Rs. 30,000. This shows what an evil annual leases are. When the lease is for a term the *ijāradār* gives the fisheries an occasional rest in his own interest.

The fish which cannot be sold fresh are cut up in the compound and dried in the sun on bamboo platforms protected from the crows and kites by nets. No curing is done. Ajmiriganj is the great market for dried fish. Tippera, Chittagong, Noākhālī and Rangpur are all customers for Mymensingh fish. Dried *pābdā* fish is said to be the best. Dried *rohit* realises Rs. 15 to 20 a maund, the smaller fish Rs. 6 to 8 a maund

The total value of the dry fish exported from the district is said to be about Rs. 40,000.

Fishermen as a class are not well off, though some of the *māthbars* who take leases from the landlord direct are exceptions. They do not take kindly to cultivation in the non-fishing season and few families have incomes equal to those of the professional cultivators among whom they live. The cost of fishing tackle and boats and the heavy wear and tear they undergo are partly responsible. Usually much of the profit goes to *ijāradārs* of a non-fishing class, who come between the landlords and the *dar-ijāradārs* of the fishing community. In no other way can we account for the comparatively small income of the landowners from *jalkars*. According to their own returns these amount to about 1½ lakhs, whereas, as has been said above, the fish sold apart from those eaten by the people who catch them are worth over 12 lakhs.

Methods  
of fishing.

The system of fishing by a *khēo* is only used where the water is sluggish. Brushwood is surrounded in a suitable place in the *bil* by bamboos stuck upright in the mud. These *khēos* have to be made early in the cold weather and their circumference is 100 feet. Weeds accumulate among the bamboos and attract fish to their shelter, especially when individual fishermen begin to disturb the clearer portions. Bamboo pegs are placed in the mud below the brushwood to prevent the fish from burrowing in the bottom and sooner or later the *khēo* is surrounded by a *daljāl*, 8 or 10 nets each 20 feet square sewn together. They are fixed to the bottom of the *bil* by bamboo pins (*kamri* or *guji*), while the surface end is fastened to bamboo posts. A day or two later the *khēo* is raised. The brushwood is taken out by hooked bamboo rods, and the nets drawn into the bank or a waiting line of boats. Fifteen or twenty men are required in this operation for each *khēo* and five or six *saranga* boats.

Another method of fishing is with the *othar* boat and the *othar* net. The boat is very long and narrow, with a raised bow and stern, which remains 5 or 6 feet above water, and the net is similar to an ordinary throw-net, only several times larger. Two or three men spread out the net along the length of the boat and drop it into the *bil* or river as the boat is rowed on by two other men. The net has folds at the bottom end, carries leaden weights, and describes a hollow cone as it sinks. As the net is pulled out of the water by the string tied to its top end, the fish slip into the folds and are hauled on to the boat with the net.

Dragnets called *bērjāl* or *sāgar-bēr* may be two or three hundred cubits in length and 30 or 40 cubits in height, leaden weights are attached to the bottom ropes and bamboo floats to the surface end. These are used for dragging the whole breadth of a river. Two big *pānsi* boats, each with a crew of 8 or 10 men, start close together. When they are ready one dashes across the river at the utmost speed, dropping the net as it goes along. Then the crew row together again, yelling at the top of their voices, so as to frighten the fish away from the open space between the boats into the meshes of the net, as it slowly completes its circle.

The *behāl*, called *kharra jāl* in Mr. De's report, is a bamboo lever contrivance for catching fish that come with the stream. The net is triangular in shape, fastened on two sides to bamboos each 30 or 40 feet long. They are pivoted on upright posts at such a height that when the base of the net touches the bottom of the river the bolted end remains within reach of a man standing on a cross bamboo in the scaffolding. When the net has been in the water for 10 minutes, the man presses down the bolted end of the bamboos, first with his hand and then with his feet, until the net is clear of the water; the fish drop into the boat at his feet, as the manipulator unfastens the apex of the net.

The nets described above are used by professional fishermen and are made from *sunn* or hemp fibre. The villagers who catch fish for their own consumption have an endless variety of methods and instruments. Fishing with hand nets is free in all navigable rivers and in most *bils* at least twice a week. In the cold weather it is a common sight to see hundreds of villagers marching to a rendezvous, where they invade the *bil* in a solid line and it is a marvel that a single fish escapes to stock the *bil* for another year. These amateurs seldom return empty handed. From one *bil* in Nikli-Dampārā I met the inhabitants of villages as far away as Dhuldia returning with an average of two fish 2 or 3 feet long and four small ones. The chief instruments used on these occasions are the *pala* or *tarpa*, a basket with a broad open bottom and a narrow opening at the top, through which the fisherman puts his hand when he has succeeded in planting his basket over a fish. Others take shrimping nets and *konches*, bamboo harpoons with 12 wired points which spread in the air when hurled at a fish in shallow water and contract in its flesh.

After every shower of rain small fish like whitebait are caught in bamboo cages at every point where there is a fall

from one field to another. Several boat loads are caught in this way in the *Mriga hāor* every day in November. Another simple way of catching fish is to bale every atom of water out of a ditch or *bunded* up portion of a *khāl*. Children amuse themselves in this way on the roadside, when the dry season begins.

In the rains, and also in the cold weather, villagers wade at night through the shallow water, carrying torches of jute sticks. The fish are attracted by the light and speared in great numbers.

Taken all round, it is probable that the fish caught in all these ways equal in weight and number those caught by professional fishermen for sale.

The earthquake of 1897 raised some *bils* and destroyed the fish in others. The *Fulkocha bil* is one of those which from being very valuable became barren for several years. The rise in the price of fish is chiefly due to the cheapness of money, but there is no doubt that the supply is diminishing also. The extension of jute steeping is unfavourable to the better varieties and the cultivation of the *bils* and *hāors* in the eastern *thānas* has seriously curtailed their breeding places.

No measures are taken to protect the fry of big fish, and no Bengali has ever been seen to throw a fish back into the water, even in the certain knowledge that it would become one hundred fold heavier in a few months. It is true that the fishing season usually extends from December to April only, and the fish are not therefore much disturbed during the breeding season, but there is no deliberate intention of maintaining a close time, and little is known of the breeding habits and seasons of the different species. Apart from privately owned tanks which are artificially stocked with fish for their own consumption by rich gentlemen, there is no attempt to breed fish artificially or to restock exhausted *bils*. If Government passed a protective law and tried to enforce it by a low paid staff of the strength that would be required, any amount of *zulum* or dishonesty would be the result. Even to restrict the fineness of the meshes of the nets and to bar the mat-like *pāli* would operate hardly on those fishermen, who catch the smaller varieties as a relish for their curries.

Agricultural  
labourers.

There are a certain number of agricultural labourers who live with their master's family and earn a yearly wage of Rs. 36 or Rs. 48 with their food. This landless class is limited, and Mymensingh depends entirely for its hired labourers on the domiciled up-countrymen or the swarms of Nuniyas, Dusāds



and others, who come from Bihar every November by river and road, and return by train in April and May. In July many of them again return for the jute season. They can earn over a rupee a day, carrying jute from the boats to the press and from the press to the flat or train.

Most of the station coolies, landlords' *barkandāzes*, professional cartmen, and Europeans' servants are up-countrymen. The District Board employs imported labour for all earthwork, and there is a striking increase in the extent to which Dacca or up-country coolies are hired by the Muhammadan cultivators to weed and cut their jute as well as for making new *ails* or plinths, digging tanks, or altering the level of their fields.

In the east and north of the district labourers from Farīdpur, Jessore and Tippera are largely employed to cut the *boro* paddy. From the middle of Chaitra or beginning of April for about a month each day a procession of 70 to 125 boats can be counted sailing up the river Dhanu. Each boat carries 10 to 15 able-bodied men. Many go to Sylhet, where they are paid 20 to 40 per cent. of the paddy reaped, the rate varying with the imminence of flood and being less on the banks of the Meghna. One man is supposed to cut 120 bundles or *āntis* in a day and from 15 or 20 bundles he would earn 20 seers, so that at the end of the season he cannot have less than 50 to 70 rupees worth of paddy to carry home. The total amount thus exported from the district as the price of labour only is reckoned at from 150,000 maunds to 80,000 maunds and from Sylhet 2,00,000 maunds.

Just as most of the professional cartmen are up-countrymen, many of the boats which are hired by the month by *mahājans* for carrying jute and rice belong to Dacca people and the hired *mānjhis* are mostly of Dacca birth. Some of the largest boats are owned by *mānjhis* from Mrizapur in the Central Provinces. They spend about 6 months in the district seeking profitable freights, and they have a bad reputation for petty thefts.

Trade is carried on to some extent by gypsies and potters, who carry their wares on foot or by boat to the remotest villages, but practically speaking the village *hāt* is the beginning and end of all trade in this district. According to an enactment of 1790 the proprietary right in the ground on which *hāts* take place is to continue vested in the landlords, but the public are to have the free use of it. This was repealed by Act XXVII of 1871, the reason apparently being that the practice of making a profit out of *hāts* had become too strong to make it possible to enforce the 1790 order.

Markets.

Landlords usually manage the *hāts* by means of *ijāradārs*, who pay anything from Rs. 5 to 2,000 per annum for the right to collect tolls from the temporary stall holders and a commission on all articles sold. *Hāts* vary much in importance, some being held twice a week, some once. They are seldom more than 3 or 4 miles apart. They are held on the banks of rivers or on high sites, where good shade is available. The first step is to put up a row of low shelters, which are used as stalls for perishable articles. Vegetables, milk, fish, fruit, oil, rice, salt and pulses are sold and bought at all these *hāts*, and there is always a group of low caste Hindus waiting to change rupees into copper and two-anna bits. Gradually barbers and cloth merchants and toy and ornament dealers begin to attend, and permanent shops are built round the centre square. A blacksmith settles in the neighbourhood and also a country spirit vendor, and this is no doubt the way in which all the important centres and towns in the district have originated. It speaks badly for the morality of the district that when a landlord wants to establish a new *hāt* to annoy a rival, he imports a colony of prostitutes as his first step.

Shops in the more important marts like Katiādi, Hosēnpur, Fulbaria, Bakshiganj, Datta-Bazār sell English glass, mirrors, crockery, writing materials, medicines, lamps, stores, matches, cigarettes, and in the adjoining godowns villagers sell their jute and rice to the *mahājans*. It is only in the so-called towns like Netrakona, Jamālpur and Kishorganj that there is a daily bazār for the supply of eatables. In these towns clothes, blankets and all the other necessities of the population are to be obtained. The inhabitants of the district are not in the habit of writing to Calcutta, and, just as in the villages, what a man cannot buy locally, he does without.

The *bepāris* and small traders are almost invariably Bengalis, chiefly of the Shāhā, Teli, Banik, Jogi, Pāl, Tanti and Basak castes. So are most of the jute commission agents and touts. In some of the bigger bazārs Mārwaris, Agarwālās and all up-country castes are found. They deal in jute, Manchester cloth, and hides. Money lenders come from all classes of Hindus, and not a few Muhammadans have taken to it recently.

Most of the *hāts* are marked in the map and there is no important place without one. Sherpur, Nālitabāri, Mohanganj and Shambhuganj, opposite Mymensingh, are perhaps the noisiest and biggest. They all take place on the public way,

which is blocked by an impenetrable mass of chattering humanity, all too busy and preoccupied to get out of the way of passing horses and bicycles.

From the inland *hāts* the chief products of the district are carried by cart or country boat to the railway or to the river-side marts, which are accessible in the rains to the huge flats of the steamer companies. The chief places to which this kind of flats come are Mirzapur, Jamurki, Elashin, Jagannāthganj and Sārisabāri in Tangāil, Bāhādurabād in Jamālpur, Netrakona, Mohanganj and Gogbazār in Netrakona, and Hiluchia, Nikli-Dampāra, Dilālpur and Bhairab in the Kishorganj subdivision. Carts from all parts of the district cross the Brahmaputra in January and February to buy cheap paddy from the villages of Nālitabāri and Haluaghāt. There has always been a considerable trade with the Gāros in cotton, honey and wax in exchange for oil, salt and dogs at the *kotes* along the foot of the hills, but otherwise there is not much inter-district trade. Trade.

The district could not get on at all without the plough and cart bullocks which are bought by dealers at the Sonapur fair in Chapra in November and brought by road through Rājshāhi, crossing the Brahmaputra at the ferries between Mādarganj and Dewangānj. Many of them are intercepted at the Jamālpur mēlā. Others go straight on to Dacca, and it is these travelling cattle more than carts which make the main roads of the district so dusty during the cold weather. Country-bred ponies of all sizes are largely imported, but the quality is inferior and the price high.

Other imports are betelnuts and *pān* from Tippera, cocoanuts from the southern districts of Bengal, wheat, barley and cattle from Bihar, and corrugated iron, metals, piece-goods and all sorts of manufactured articles from or via Calcutta.

In spite of the fact that much rice is now imported even from Rangoon, jute ensures that the exports exceed the imports by many lakhs. Of the total amount of jute grown in the Province in 1914, 20 per cent. was computed to come from this district. There are 5½ lakhs of acres under jute, so the total crop must exceed three hundred thousand tons and allowing for wastage and internal consumption jute brings sixty million rupees into the district annually.

In addition to the weekly or biweekly *hāts* there are some annual fairs at certain places. The Jamālpur mēlā, which goes on from February to April, is the most important, as it is Fairs.

the distributing centre for most of the cattle which come from Bihar in the cold weather. Its income at 10 annas for each animal sold has exceeded Rs. 9,000. A full account will be found in the Gazetteer chapter under Jamālpur.

Another important fair takes place at Kishorganj in August. Merchants from other districts sell considerable quantities of piece-goods, shoes, hardware and miscellaneous articles. The Dole fair at Hosēnpur in March is very similar to the Jhulan fair at Kishorganj. The mēlās at Bālijuri near Mādar-ganj in February, at Sherpur in April and at Porabāri in December are of local importance.

An important mēlā which owes its importance more to religion than to trade takes place at Gupta Brindaban in the Madhupur jungle. There is a Bairāgi Akhra in a secluded spot of the forest, which is almost Himalayan in character, and pilgrims come from all parts of Mymensingh and beyond to worship the gods who live in the giant trees and to bathe in the Sāgardighi tank.

The annual bathing festival of the *Astami Snān*, when Hindu ladies come from all parts of Bengal to bathe in the Brahmaputra also encourages temporary fairs at the chief bathing places, Jamālpur, Baiganbāri and Hosēnpur.



CHAPTER IX.

COMMUNICATIONS.

IN the time of the Mughal Viceroys the main road from Dacca to Northern Bihar ran through the Tangail subdivision. It is described in Rennell's Road Book as the Dacca-Malda road and the principal stages in this district were :—

Dumroy	...	...	34 miles from Dacca, where it crossed the Bunsī river (Bangsa).
Chandapatul	...	...	6 miles 1 furlong.
Mirzahaut (Mirzapur)	...	11	do. 4 furlongs.
Puccooloe (Pakulla)	...	6	do. 4 ditto.
Attyah	...	...	8 do. 8 ditto.
Santosh	...	...	4 miles 2 furlongs, where it crossed the Lojung river.
Ghandrackpur	...	...	4 miles 7 furlongs, where it crossed the Joobne river.
Belcuchy in Pabna	...	9	miles 3 furlongs, where it crossed the Conie river.

No one now using the road from Mirzapur to Tangail would suppose it to be an old trunk road. Some portions are mere tracks, the breaks are numerous and there are no signs of *pukka* bridges. The main ferries, however, remain the same, the Jamuna having taken the place of the old Jabuna and Konai, and in the rains occupying the whole distance between Ghandrackpur and Belcuchy.

Roads in the 18th century.

Bisni was an important place in Rennell's time and the Malda road had a branch from Pakulla leading north through the present Tangail and Jamālpur subdivisions *viā* Batcora, 9 miles, Booketah, 3, Hummidpur, 8, Chantarra, 6, Moodapoor (Pookarya), 10, Bowla, 10, Naranpur, 7, Hajipur, 6, Shahzadpur, 7, and Dewanganj, 14, to Chilmāri, 21.

An alternative road to Bihar is called the Purneah second road by Rennell. Crossing the Bānār river at Toke, 52 miles from Dacca, it passed through Mymensingh, Baiganbāri and Piyārpur, where it crossed the Brahmaputra to Sherpur Daskahania, as it was then called. This road was important for

military purposes and may have been older than the Pakulla road. It connected Dacca with Mymensingh and Jamālpur in the early days of the Company when Jamālpur was a military cantonment. Its continuation from Mymensingh to Jamālpur and Sarisabāri is styled the Mymensingh-Subarnakhālī road, though its terminus at the old seat of the Hemnagar family on the Brahmaputra has been washed away for many years. The road was alternately neglected and improved: since the opening of the Railway in 1884, it is little used except by cattle travelling from Bihar to the big *hāts* in Mymensingh and Dacca, and the fine masonry bridge over the Brahmaputra at Toke, which is said to have been blown up in the Mutiny, is still replaced by an ordinary ferry.

Other roads described by Rennell are to Susung-Durgapur from Sagardi (four miles short of Toke on the Dacca side), *viā* Egārasindur, Dugdugga, Osumpur (Nursundy river), Modarganj, Bokainagar (Momensingh) and Simulkandi (Kangsha river), and to Ajmeriganj in Sylhet, *viā* Sagardi, Janglebāri, Pānchcouniya and Itna. The existence of this road seems to show that the eastern part of Kishorganj in the last century has suffered a process the reverse of raising, for no roads are possible in the direction of Itna, east and north of Janglebāri, now. A branch from Ajmeriganj crossed the Meghna at Madarganj to reach the present police-station Khāliajuri on the Dhanu river, which was apparently then called the Bolee.

In 1872 Reynolds says there were 146 miles of road in good condition and 108 miles of tracks. Only Rs. 8,000 was allotted by Government for road improvement. There are now 950 miles and new roads are being made every year. The total expenditure on maintenance alone is over a lakh.

The opening of the Dacca-Mymensingh Railway in 1884 and its extension to Jagannāthganj on the Jamuna was of tremendous value in opening out the Sadar and Jamālpur subdivisions. Another branch from Singhjāni (Jamālpur) to Bahādarabad, where a steamer ferry crosses the Brahmaputra to Fulchari was opened in 1913. It has already accelerated communications with Calcutta, Darjeeling and Assam. The new line is exceedingly popular with the up-country coolies, who spend the cold weather in Dacca and Mymensingh and return to plough their own fields at the beginning of the rains. Another line in connection with the Assam-Bengal Railway is under construction through Bhairab Bazar, Kishorganj, Iswarganj and Gauripur to Mymensingh; from Gauripur a line will run to Shāmganj, and from Shāmganj there will be two

branches to Netrakona and Jaria respectively. It is possible that the Jaria line will be extended to Dargapur and the Netrakona line to Mohanganj. This railway will be of great advantage to the northern subdivision, which has no river communication with Mymensingh and has fewer outlets for its jute by country boat than Tangail or Kishorganj.

Not less than three separate surveys have been made for lines between Tangail and Mymensingh direct, or by joining up Tangail and Bausi, or Tangail and Jamālpur. The railway will be expensive to make, as any alignment must cross stretch after stretch of *āman* paddy lands, which are five or six feet under water in the rains. When the broad gauge line is opened from Ishwardi to Serājganj, an attempt will be made to extend it to Mymensingh, but there is great difficulty in finding a suitable high bank for the steamer ferry on the Mymensingh side anywhere south of Pingna. At present travellers from Mymensingh to Tangail usually go by train to Jagannāthganj, steamer to Porabāri, and then 12 miles by country boat, bicycle or horse. The *chars* are broken by shifting channels which must be negotiated in different ways at every season of the year, and a permanent bridged road is impossible. The alternative route to Tangail is 60 miles of road, *viā* Muktagācha, Madhupur and Kālihati. This is the finest road in the district with several large *pukka* bridges, and ferries only at Gābtali, Kālihati, Solakura and Pauli. The straight road to Tangail *viā* Fulbaria and Deopārā was abandoned some years ago, and the bridges in the jungle portion having been allowed to fall into disrepair, it is barely passable by carts for two or three months in the spring. A good road goes to Gopālpur from Madhupur, and thence to Hemnagar. It is passable at all times of the year. Another road with only one bad break connects Gopālpur with Ghatāil and Kalihati.

Roads  
Tangail  
subdivi-  
sion.

Other roads in the Tangail subdivision are from Jamurki or Pākulla *viā* Karatia as well as *viā* Dilduar to Tangail, Tangail to Bāsāil, and Tangail to Elashīn and Nāgarpur. The latter is important, as Elashīn is a big jute centre, and if there were not so many breaks in this road, it would be the easiest means of access to Tangail, as launches and steamers can always reach Elashīn *viā* the Dhaleswari. There is a road parallel to the Jamuna from Sārisabāri to Tangail, which is the quickest way of riding to Tangail in the cold weather; parts of it are very good going, but the portion between Hemnagar and Bhuapur, about 6 miles south, is too low to be capable of permanent improvement except at ruinous cost.

Roads  
Jamālpur  
subdivi-  
sion.

The Jamālpur subdivision is well served with good bicycling roads and in the cold weather it is possible to ride or drive anywhere. On the Jamālpur-Madarganj road two rivers, the Jināi and Chatal, are unbridged, and for two or three months at the end of the rains, when there is not sufficient water for the proper ferry boats, these places are the cause of much inconvenience. There is a road to Bakshiganj *viā* Kamar-erchar, direct from the beginning of the Sherpur road on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, and another from Sherpur *viā* Sribardi Sambhuganj, which goes on to Mahendraganj at the foot of the Gāro Hills. Both are full of breaks with water up to the saddle in September and October, but, as the road from Dewānganj to Bakshiganj is at best a cold weather track, it would be good policy to bridge one of them completely, now that the road from Jāmālpur to Dewānganj has been made obsolete by the railway.

There is a narrow road with many bamboo bridges between Sherpur and Bangāon. The Nālitabāri road has always given trouble as its high embankment passes directly across the flood current of enormous *bils*. There is one permanent ferry on this road and 5 or 6 other breaks are now traversed by wooden bridges which are not wide or strong enough to admit of wheeled traffic.

The Piyārpur-Sherpur road has no ferries and is always in fair condition. A branch runs directly north from Chandra-kona through Nakla to Nālitabāri, but the northern portion passes through very low and jungly villages and is hard to find even in the cold weather.

The Sherpur-Jamālpur road (9 miles) is metalled. A bridge over the Sheri river is badly wanted, as there are months in the year when the water is not deep enough for the ferry boats nor yet shallow enough to ford in comfort. Another difficulty is that the ferry boat at Jamālpur lands passengers nearly a mile away from the beginning of the *pukka* road, with only a track through heavy sand to bridge the interval.

On the south-west of the railway line there are useful local board roads to Tulsipur *viā* Shāhāzadpur and to Dīgpāt.

The principal roads in the Sadar Subdivision are to Mukta-gācha, 10 miles, all metalled, to Fulbaria, 13 miles (5 miles *pukka*) to Trisāl, 13 miles, from Bālipārā to Nandāil, 11 miles, and from Gafargāon to Bhālukā, 13 miles. On the north of the river, Fulpur can be reached either from the Cutcherry Ghāt (14 miles), the disadvantage of this road being that a mile of sand has to be traversed on the other side before the

Roads  
Sadar  
subdivi-  
sion.



embanked road is reached, or *viâ* Tārakanda (17 miles) from the Sambhuganj Ghāt, one mile south of the Collector's office which is the starting point also for Netrokona and Iswarganj. The road to Iswarganj (16 miles) and to Ātharabāri (25 miles) is *pukka* as far as Rāmgōpālpur, 11 miles, and has a branch to Gauripur Bazār which then connects with Shāmganj and the Netrakona and Durgapur roads. A useful road, always in bad condition, runs from Baiganbāri to Bahādurpur, 8 miles north.

The Fulpur road goes on to Haluaghāt, but the breaks are innumerable and even in the cold weather it is no pleasure to bicycle or ride. In the rains Haluaghāt is entirely cut off. There is quite a fair cold weather track connecting Haluaghāt and Nālitabāri.

Netrakona is connected with Mymensingh (25 miles) and Kishorganj (41 miles) by fully embanked roads which are passable throughout the year. The road to Durgapur leaves the Netrokona road at Shāmganj, and is quite good as far as Jaria, where it crosses the Kangsha. From there it is full of breaks, and the Someswari is so shallow that no regular ferry can be maintained in the winter months. The sands are very treacherous, so fording without a guide is dangerous.

A good road of 10 miles connects Netrakona with Purbadhala, meeting the Shāmganj-Durgapur road at Ilāspur. The direct road from Netrakona to Durgapur, *viâ* Deotukan, is still hardly fit for cart traffic.

From Netrakona eastwards there are roads *viâ* Barhatta to Mohanganj (16 miles) and to Teligati (10 miles). This place is also the terminus of the excellent bicycling road direct from Mymensingh *viâ* Gauripur into the heart of the Kendua thana. The road from Mymensingh to Kendua *viâ* Iswarganj and Sandikona (34 miles) is bridged throughout, and goes on to Gog-Bazar, 2 miles east, where the land of *khāls* and *boro* fields begins. With the exception of the very inadequate track from Karimganj to Badla in the south and the Barhatta-Mohanganj road in the north, there are no roads at all east of a line drawn from Nazirganj in thana Durgapur to Katiādi on the Brahmaputra *viâ* Teligati, Gog-Bazār and Nilganj. Cross country riding is possible, but only on ponies which do not mind swimming rivers. Even boat communications are bad, as with the exception of the Dhanu river there are no waterways running north south and those running east west take circuitous paths.

To Kishorganj the usual route is to Gafargāon by train, and thence 6 miles along the Toke-Dacca road parallel to the

Brahmaputra, crossing it at Hosenpur, and 10 miles by a road on the other side, half of which is *pukka*. The crossing at Hosenpur is very trying in the cold weather, as though the Brahmaputra is nowhere fordable south of Mymensingh the high banks at this place are very wide apart, so there is a great expanse of fine sand to negotiate.

In the rains it is a common practice to take a boat direct from Gafargāon to Hosēnpur.

From Hosēnpur roads go to Katiādi and Bājītpur, to Nandāil and to Dēwānganj Bazar. From Kishorganj there are fair roads to Karimganj and Jayka, east and south east, to Katiādi south, and to Atharabāri and Nilganj north. A continuation of the Nilganj road *viā* Tarāil Hāt to Kēndua is badly wanted to avoid the tiresome detour *viā* Atharabāri.

Bhairab Bazar is connected with Katiādi by a road, but the easiest way of reaching this important jute centre is by steamer from Nārāyanganj, or by train *viā* Tangi. It is unfortunate that there are only three other steamer *ghāts* in the east of this district, *viz.* Dilālpur opposite Bājītpur town, Bangalpāra near Astagrām and Betanga which is quite in the wilds. The next stopping place of the Surma Valley Despatch service is Ajmeriganj on the Sylhet side opposite Khāliājūrī. Now-a-days only a cargo service runs up the Dhanu river to Sonāmganj.

The river system has been described in Chapter I. The larger rivers are all used by country boats carrying, anything up to 1,600 maunds, to export jute and rice to Dacca and Goalundo and to hawk round earthenware utensils and various imports in the cold weather. Generally speaking the travelling public do not make much use of the rivers. There are, however, certain well-known places between which country boats ply regularly in the rains. They are called *gayna* boats and there is a fixed fare for passengers and luggage. The best known routes are from Gafargāon to Hosēnpur, Kaoraid to Matkhola, and from Netrakona to Nāzīrganj. In Kishorganj and Tangāil and parts of Netrakona officers do their touring in the rains by means of *green* boats hired from Dacca at about Rs. 120 a month including the crew, and the people have to use boats to get from their houses to the fields and the *hāts*. Launches can get to Tangāil in August, and there is plenty of water for them at all times of the year in the Dhanu and Meghna rivers, but they are useless in the Jamālpur, Sadar and Netrakona subdivisions, though the Director of Land Records' launch has been as far as Mohanganj along the Kangsha.

Carts are plentiful except in Kendua and Kishorganj thanas. The professional cartmen are all up-country men and use bullocks imported from Bihar. Small ponies are plentiful throughout the district, but they are only used for pack purposes to any extent in Tangail and Kishorganj. Ponies can go any where in the cold weather, and the best riding is probably in the south of Tangail, Dewanganj, and Sherpur. In Jamālpur, Gopālpur, Netrakona and the Sadar thanas the rice fields get too hard, there being no winter crops to speak of, and in Kishorganj the country does not dry up sufficiently till January and then the first shower makes the going incredibly heavy.

There are a large number of elephants in the district, for the most part fairly distributed, but the mahouts are a class to themselves for stupidity and boorishness. *Tikka garies* are not much dearer than carts, and are extensively used along the Jamālpur-Sherpur, Mymensingh-Muktagācha, Mymensingh-Fulbaria, Mymensingh-Netrakona, Mymensingh-Iswarganj and Gafargāon-Kishorganj roads. Quite poor people club together, and use them on the more established routes. There are no *ekka garies* at all, which is difficult to understand seeing how useful they are in Pabna, Rajshāhi and other adjoining districts.

The ferries maintained by the District Board are on the whole sufficient, and serve their purpose quite well. They have been gradually bought up from the landlords on payment of 10 years' profits. In the old days the landlords admitted that they were bound to provide ferry boats and they gave land rent free to the ferrymen. Early in the 19th century it was proposed to resume them on the ground that the assets were not included in the permanent settlement. There are no papers to show that the proposal was acted on in this district. Considering the large revenues appropriated by Government from the important ferries at Mymensingh and Jamālpur it is a legitimate grievance that more money is not spent on making the landing places reasonably convenient for foot passengers and especially for bullock carts and *tikka garies*. The cruel punishment which has to be meted out to bullocks before heavy loads can be got on to the ferry boats at any of the main ferries would appal any one not used to the callousness with which animals are treated in this country.

The District Board rest houses number 26. They are all marked on the map, which is issued with this volume. Those at Deopāra, Nāliabāri, Madhupur, Tangail, Katiādi and

Gafargāon have the best situations. New bungalows with *pukka* roofs are being built at Barhatta and Mirzapur. One is badly wanted at Dilālpur for officers arriving by steamer, and at Ratanganj, as a centre for the jungle.

For an officer wishing to tour with tents, all along the north bank of the Brahmaputra there are splendid camping places. Fulkocha and Amritola in Jamālpur, Bālijuri in Mādarganj, Elenga in Tangāil and Fatehpur in Bājitpur have all the requisites of a comfortable camp. In the Madhupur jungle water is the difficulty. The best sites are Salgrāmpur, Singarchala, Sāgardighi and Kālmegha.



## CHAPTER X.

## LAND REVENUE.

THERE were three different settlements of Bengal under the Mughal Emperors. The first settlement in 1582 by Rājā Todar Māl fixed the revenue of Sarkār Bājuha at Rs. 9,87,921, but this included a large part of Rājshāhi and Dacca. At Nawāb Jafar Khān's settlement in 1722 the unit of *Sarkārs* was abandoned, and the whole province of Bengal divided into 13 *Chaklas*, subdivided into 1,600 parganas. The greater part of Mymensingh was included in Chakla Jehangir Nagar, which comprised 236 parganas with a revenue of Rs. 1,92,829. Husain Shāh is said to have organized the Dewān Khānā or revenue units which were the original parganas. They are still fairly compact and homogeneous areas in this district, though in some parts villages of different parganas are unaccountably mixed up. In the days before maps it is probable that villages were assigned to units without any clear idea of their locality, and an unscrupulous landlord would encourage villages, which were dissatisfied with their own master, to attach themselves to his pargana without any regard to their geographical position. Some parganas may be partitioned shares of earlier parganas, the various heirs having given their names to their own portions.

Early settlement.

Origin of parganas.

Mir Kāsim added many taxes in 1763, but as regards land revenue his action was confined to the resumption of *Jāgīrs*, i.e., lands given to soldiers on condition that they provided a certain number of armed forces, elephants, cavalry and infantry for the defence of the province. The corresponding *nawāra* lands, out of whose incomes large fleets had to be maintained to act against the Portuguese and the Arracanese and other pirates, as also against the inroads of Assamese kings down the Brāhmaputra, remained much longer in the hands of the Nawābs of Murshidabād and Dacca.

The first regular settlement after the British occupation was made for a term of five years by the Committee of Circuit, which visited Dacca in 1772 A.D. This was the quinquennial

N. B.—The last Nawara lands of the Nawāb of Dacca were resumed in 1822 and of the Nawāb of Murshidabād in 1834

The decennial settlement.

settlement. Estates were let out to the highest bidder without any regard to title. After this, settlements were made from year to year till 1787 A.D., when instructions were received by Mr. William Wroughton, Collector, to make a fresh settlement which would be continued for a term of years. "It is by no means our intention," observed the Board of Revenue, "to lay a heavy increase upon the country which cannot be collected without distress. All that we intend is that the jama shall be such as the Company may fairly exact and to guard against further defalcations in the revenue by collusion, fraud and misrepresentation." In conformity with these instructions Mr. Wroughton submitted his settlement proposals on the 12th February 1788. The district was then one with Noākhāli, and the joint revenue proposed was Rs. 15,57,520 as opposed to Rs. 15,43,789 of Dacca and Bākarganj. This was the decennial settlement which came into operation in Mymensingh in 1791 A.D. In 1793 it was made permanent.

The incidence of the land revenue in Mymensingh.

At this time the district was exceptionally backward, the Sherpur and Susung parganas among others being at most one-quarter cultivated. At first the zamindārs did not find it easy to pay the revenue fixed by Wroughton, as the histories of the parganas show. In Muhammadan times the zamindārs were frequently imprisoned and tortured for falling in arrears, and under the early English Collectors we often read of cases of their being in jail. On these occasions an Amīn would be deputed to take charge of the zamindāri. Tufton writing to the Board in 1794, anticipated that he would not be able to arrest the proprietors of Pargana Noābād, because he did not know their names, "they having given their *taahuds* in the names of their ancestors or else in the initial letters of their own, a practice in this district." In 1794 the Board in connection with the Sherpur 3 annas ordered that no zamindār should be imprisoned for arrears of revenue "provided he had landed property which if sold will be sufficient to make good the deficiency." As the result of the rapid extension of cultivation and the cheapening of money the revenue from being 70 or 80 per cent. of the landlords' gross collections became an increasingly nominal fraction of the potential assets of the estate. Whereas Akbar had fixed the revenue at one-third of the gross produce of the soil, it now barely reaches one-fiftieth of this proportion. The total rentals of all classes of landlords in the cess returns of 1908 are shown as Rs. 85,23,963, but the settlement records make them about 10 per cent. higher. Allowing for *nazar*, *hāt* and *jalkar* income, Government collects

less than 8 per cent. of the gross income derived from the land by the landlords, while what the landlords receive from their tenants is certainly not more than 8 per cent. of the money value of the produce. The present revenue of 8½ lakhs works out at between 3 and 4 annas an acre against 6 annas in Faridpur, where, however, the Settlement Officer calculates that only 5 per cent. of the value of the crops goes to the landlords.

In 1911 there were 9,903 estates in the district classified as follows :—

Revenue.	No. of estates.	Annual demand.
Rs.		Rs.
Under 1	...	418
1 to 10	...	5,156
10 to 50	...	2,881
50 to 100	...	628
100 to 500	...	620
500 to 1,000	...	92
1,000 upwards	...	108
		213
		21,935
		66,924
		44,849
		1,30,883
		63,563
		5,46,872

Of these 9,652 with a total revenue of Rs. 7,67,674 were permanently settled.

The estate which pays the largest demand is Pukhuria, 10 annas, Tauzi No. 122 with a revenue of Rs. 45,843. Ninety-eight estates covering three-quarters of the district are zamindāries or shares of parganas formed into separate tauzies by partition. The rest are Khārijā Tāluku, whose origin is illustrated in a despatch from Barwell, Chief of Dacca, to Warren Hastings in 1773. "While zamindārs are eaten up by harpies in their employ and cannot attend to their business personally the lands will ever be impoverished in order to force the zamindārs to partial sales until his exigencies reduce him to make a total alienation, and his estate becomes partitioned into a number of tāluks. For it is the interest of those in employ under a zamindār to bring the lands into bad condition and in such reduced state, from the funds raised by their employment, to purchase the best parcel of lands and thus from servants raise themselves to be masters." In 1804 a regulation was passed that no subordinate tenures or *Khandas* thus created would be allowed to pay a separate revenue unless registered within a year. The largest *tāluk* in the district is Bālasuti Digar belonging to the Nātor Rāj, which obtained a separate number on the Revenue Roll so recently as 1909 after litigation with the owners of pargana Pukhuria which had continued over a century.

Perman-  
ently  
settled  
Estates.

The *tāluku*s of Tappe-Hazrādi were recognised by Government as separate estates on the application of the descendants of Isā Khān. They were given a permanent *mālikānā* of Rs. 3,529 *sikka* in lieu of their zamindāri rights. Most of the *khārijā tāluks* are to be found in the Netrakona and Kishorganj subdivisions, being most numerous in parganas, which remained for any time in the hands of Muhammadan families.

*Bējabēdā tāluks* are *khārijā tāluks* whose separate registration after being allowed by the Collector was vetoed by the Board. They have their own tauzi numbers in the Collectorate and pay their revenue direct into the Treasury, but remain liable if the parent estate falls into arrears. Some resumed *lākherāj* properties known in the eastern parganas as *karāri* likewise pay their revenue through the nearest *khārijā tāluk*.

Tempor-  
arily-  
settled  
Estates.

The temporarily-settled estates number 180 with a revenue in 1914 of Rs. 80,299. They consist of accretions to permanently-settled estates in the beds of rivers, which have dried up or changed their course. *Deāra* surveys under Act IX of 1847 for assessing these areas were made in the lower part of the Jamuna by Captain Stuart in 1867 and by Babu Parbati Charan Ray, Deputy Collector, in the old Brahmaputra in 1880-82.

Resumption proceedings were also instituted on a large scale between 1834 and 1846, under Regulation II of 1819, for newly-formed *chars* in the Jamuna. As the landlords of this district have never gone in for claiming abatement of land revenue for diluvion and it was held that at the Permanent Settlement the site of the Jamuna was traversed only by insignificant streams, most of the cases were struck off as reformation *in situ*. That 37 square miles in scattered blocks are still shown on the roll of temporarily-settled estates seems to be due to the fact that the proprietors did not appeal. The maps prepared were rough plans not drawn to scale and for the most part it is only possible to make rough guesses at the area they cover.

Some temporarily-settled estates were permanently settled between 1860 and 1871 and these are known as *Daimi banda-bast mahals*.

Govern-  
ment  
Estates.

The number of estates owned by Government is 71 with a revenue of Rs. 31,668. The area is 20,024 acres. Most of them were purchased at auction sale in default of other bidders for one rupee. Others are island *chars* in the Jamuna taken possession of under Regulation II of 1825. *Tāluk Bayard*, where the Civil Station of Mymensingh is built, and the site of the Jamālpur Cantonments were bought for civil purposes.



Tappe Nikli has a revenue of Rs. 9,597. Most of the others are very unimportant, and of 18 no revenue is realised as they cannot be traced.

Among the temporarily-settled estates and those which are the property of Government, 99 with an area of 27 square miles and with a revenue of Rs. 38,241 are held under direct management by the Collector. Khas Mahals.

Two fisheries or *jalkars* were permanently settled as separate estates. Early in the 19th century a Mr. Craig proposed to take settlement of all *jalkars* and jungles, but his petition was disallowed because he was a British subject. The Board also doubted if the Civil Courts would accept his assertion that the majority of the fisheries in navigable rivers were not shown in the old assessment papers as part of the estates on the banks. For many years they were treated so by prescription, Government taking no interest in the matter, as fisheries in navigable rivers are public property according to the English Law. In 1885 the High Court decided that the Indian Law was different, but the proceedings started in 1860 to resume 115 fisheries were struck off by the Commissioner on the ground that the river dealt with in the first case (the Kharia) was not navigable, and Government thus lost a valuable source of revenue. The proceedings covered practically all rivers except the Dhanu and section 21 (3) of Regulation II of 1819 does not allow the re-opening of such proceedings. Government has recently decided that further resumption proceedings are impracticable.\*

When Mr. Le Gros was Collector, he proposed a *Kheddah* as a source of revenue and a means of mitigating the loss caused by the depredations of wild elephants.

There are altogether 1,662 revenue-free estates recorded in Register B, Part I of the Collectorate, classified as follows :—

1. Confirmed after enquiry as valid Lākherāj	43	Revenue Free Estates.
2. Released after summary enquiry as being under 50 bighas. These are called <i>Wāg-uzastī lākherāj</i> and there are many that have never been registered ...	56	
3. Redeemed by payment of ten times the annual revenue under the old Regulations ...	39	
4. Redeemed under the Partition Act, VIII of 1876 ...	1,524	

Register B I was rewritten from the old Register C in which there are 169 entries, but for some reason many estates were never registered. Thus there are many valid grants which have never been entered. The largest of these is the one held by the successors of Isā Khān in Tappe Hazrādi.\*

Many of the rent-free properties held under private proprietors were originally granted to the Brāhman priests of the old zamindārs or were set aside in the charge of a Shebāit for the maintenance of the worship of a god. *Brahmottars* and *Debottars* of the Hindus have their counterpart in the *pīrpāl* granted for the worship of a Muhammadan saint. These are extremely numerous in Fulpur and other *thānās*. Sometimes the cultivator in charge is elected by the villagers, but more often one family passes on the managership by inheritance like any other permanent rent-free holding, and a very small share of the proceeds is devoted to charity or religion.

Subordi-  
nate  
Tenures.

There is not much subinfeudation in the district and tenures rarely go below the second degree. The chief titles of subordinate tenures paying rent to the landlord are :—

(1) *Shikmi Tālūks*, which is a wide term and includes those at a rent which is liable to enhancement and those of which the rent is fixed in perpetuity. The latter are usually called *Kāimi mirāsh* or *maurasī shikmi tālūks*. *Mistāk* is used of the same thing in the Joānshāhi Pargana, and *nagani jamā tāluk* in Susung.

(2) *Patni tālūks*; Reynolds, the Collector, in 1878 writes that these are very rare in Mymensingh, and it does not appear that Regulation VIII of 1819, which made the so-called *patni tālūks* of Burdwān permanent on a fixed rent, applied strictly to any tenures already in existence in Mymensingh. Subsequently, however, many tenures were styled *patni* in the sanads that created them, especially in Susung. The landlords claim that as they were created after the Permanent Settlement, the rent is not fixed in perpetuity, although as a matter of fact it has never been altered. The claim seems unjustifiable as the word *patni* was used in the documents with the very purpose of granting this privilege.

*Dikhli* is used in the Hazrādi Pargana to describe specific portions of a *khārījā* or *shikmi tāluk*, for which the grantee pays his fixed proportion of the revenue or rent through the original owner.

*Ijārās* are temporary leases of certain villages. In

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\* Usually known by the case numbers, 22, 23, 24.

Reynolds' time *ijārās* were common as few of the zamindārs managed their own property. At the present day they are increasingly rare, and most of those that survive have been found in the jungly villages of Sherpur Pargana near the Gāro Hills and in the Madhupur jungle. The leases were usually only for five years and, as Reynolds says, "the practice was a great cause of litigation and the backwardness of the district. The farmer has no object in making improvements, and, in general, he has no capital to do so; his aim is to make the most he can out of the village during his short tenure of it. The state of things is best when the farm is given to the village *mandal*, who is somewhat restrained by the force of local opinion from acts of oppression and extortion. But the farmer is often one of the zamindār's *āmla*, who probably sublets the village to some unscrupulous dependent of his own; and then the unfortunate ryots are fleeced in every possible way."

A *chak* may be either a tenure or a ryoti holding. It invariably means that the rent is fixed in perpetuity. Rich ryots have been in the habit of paying a fixed sum down to the landlord in consideration of which they will continue to hold at the same rate or at the then village rate for ever. They are particularly common in Tangail and Iswarganj.

*Jimbā* is a loose generic term, by which the landlords are fond of describing all kinds of tenures, especially in civil suits for arrears of rent. It binds them to nothing. Many of the tenures were granted by documents in which no rent was specified, but it was to be fixed after measurement according to the village rates. Though no term is specified the use of other words like *patni* or *chak*, and the fact that the rent once fixed has never been altered has led to the Settlement Department recording many *jimbās* as permanent tenures on fixed rent.

The other tenancies in the district are almost universally described as *jotes*. The somewhat artificial distinction between tenures and ryoti holdings introduced by the Tenancy Act made no difference to the dealings of landlords and tenants, and tenancies of 400 bighas and tenancies of two bighas continued to be created under the same form of *kabuliyat* and to enjoy the same customary rights. Thus there are a large number of families, especially in the Dewānganj *thānā*, who started as cultivators, but are now in possession of several hundreds of acres, the great bulk of which is sublet on cash rents. Some of these *jotes* could not but be recorded as tenures. In 1864 Justices Kemp and Glover classified the Patiladaha *jotes* with the *hāolās* of Bākarganj as heritable and transferable.

The estate has, however, persistently opposed the entry of permanent on the ground that the *kabuliyats* are for a term of years and that *salāmī* is paid as a condition of transfer. On the other hand new *kabuliyats* are seldom executed until long after the previous one has expired, and there are no cases of re-settlement being refused.

As the Tenancy Act made it definitely impossible for one ryot to hold under another and failed to provide any protection for tenure holders of the agricultural class, who were possessed of occupancy rights by custom, it is a matter of vital importance to these people whether they are recorded as tenure-holders or ryots. Fortunately all the prominent *jotedārs* have stated in written petitions that their under-ryots enjoy under them all the rights which they themselves enjoy under the zamindār. With this admission to help the under-ryots to claim the privileges of occupancy ryots by custom under section 183 of the Tenancy Act, the Settlement Department has to some extent solved the problem by recording the great bulk of the Patiladaha *jotedārs* as settled ryots.

Ryoti holdings on a fixed rent are very much the exception. Many of those so recorded were not intended to be such, but the occupiers have taken advantage of the slackness of the landlord in not making periodical enhancements, or keeping proper papers, to claim the benefit of section 50 of the Tenancy Act.

Ryoti  
holdings.

*Mokta jamās* are lump rentals not based on area; they are asserted by many ryots on absolutely insufficient grounds in 105 cases. They do, however, occur in the east of the district and are usually but not necessarily *mokarrarī*. *Rang-jamās* are fancy rents, as a rule settlement being taken for a year only. The usual title of under-ryots is *korfa* or *chukāni*. In some parts of Jamālpur *chukāni* is a form of usufructuary mortgage. The usual expressions for usufructuary mortgages are *jaisuddhi*, *daisuddhi*, *khāi khalāsi*, *garbhi*. *Khāi khalāsi* means that after the land has been held for a certain number of years both the interest and principal of the original loan are cleared off. *Daisuddhi* and *garbhi* mean that the land is held in lieu of interest only, so long as the loan is not repaid. Both forms are very common. Ordinary mortgages or *rehān* are not common.

Produce-paying tenants have been dealt with in the chapter on the material condition of the people. *Dhānkarārī* or those paying a fixed number of maunds of rice are not common, *bargadars* paying half or occasionally one-third of the produce



actually reaped are extremely numerous. Reynolds found *bargā* agreements, which are seldom in writing, a fruitful source of unsatisfactory litigation. Recent experience is that the division of the produce gives rise to remarkably few disputes.

In 1878 very few of the ryots executed *kabuliyats*. They are now the rule rather than the exception. The long preamble contains many conditions in archaic language, which are never intended to be acted on, and the ryot has never any hesitation in denying his signature or mark, or in saying that they were exacted by force.

In the time of the Mughal Emperors, every village had its *mandal* and *patwāri*. They acted as the agents of the zamindārs not only in collecting the revenue, but in all communications between the Imperial Government and the people. Kanungos were officers of Government associated with the zamindārs for the purpose of checking and controlling their proceedings. The permanent settlement gave the *patwāri* system its death blow and, as Government lost its hold over the zamindārs, the Kanungo's inspection was set at naught.\*

System of  
rent  
collection.

For many years the *patwāries* continued to collect the rents for the landlords, but they were very irregular in their payments and the Civil Court files were full of cases in which the *patwāri* had to be sued for the rendering of accounts or *Nikās*. In some estates there are still a few specially privileged or *huzuri* tenants, who are allowed to pay their rents direct to the landlord.

Taken all round the relations between the landlords and ryots are not at all bad, though both sides profess to look on the other with considerable suspicion and jealousy. It is a long time since the oppression of zamindārs led to the wholesale desertion of villages by their inhabitants such as Bayard reported in 1791 for the Mymensingh and Jafarshāhi parganas, and for Atia, where "out of the 1,400 mauzas of which the richest zamindāri is his district was composed, 500 only were in a state of cultivation.

Relations  
of land-  
lords and  
tenants.

Throughout the 19th century false criminal cases were the chief instrument in the hands of the landlords for browbeating the tenants, but the tenants soon learnt to combine and then the landlord was powerless, unless he could bribe the *māthbars* to forsake the common cause. It may be many years yet before the ryots realise their full rights under the Tenancy

\* Select Committee, House of Commons Report.

Act, and in the meantime they submit to all the exactions which have the sanction of custom without a murmur. Nevertheless in essentials, whatever is the case in the rest of Bengal, in this district the tenants are the masters of the situation.

It may be interesting to summarise here the chief sections of the Tenancy Act which are constantly ignored in the district.

Ways in  
which the  
Tenancy  
Act is  
ignored.

(1) Section 58. Rent receipts are often not given. When given, they are often incomplete, not specifying the total area or the total rent. Successful prosecutions are difficult, because the landlord always says that the tenant has refused to accept the *dākhilā*. The ryots have an unreasonable, but not unnatural, objection to accepting a *dākhilā* in cases of rent disputes, which specifies an area less than that actually held. On the other hand if the landlord substituted the settlement area, it would be construed as an admission that the rent paid corresponded with an area larger than that shown in his own *jamabandī*. Instead of granting a printed *dākhilā*, when the first kist is paid, the landlord usually gives strips of paper called *rokas* for each instalment, and only when the rent is paid in full, substitutes a *check* from his counterfoil receipt book. The *rokas* are all that most ryots have to show as proof of payment and are almost worthless as evidence, as they do not show the total rent or the amount that is paid as arrears and for the current demand. It would be easier for the executive to enforce the section, if there was a penalty for not giving receipts for *nazar* and other payments, which are not illegal.

(2) Section 74. Some or all of the following *abwābs* are realised in nearly every village.

(a) *grāmkharcha*, or collection expenses, to the *āmla* at 1 anna, 2 annas or 8 annas of the rent. In some cases a large percentage goes to the zamindār himself.

(b) *Ijārādāri*, in cases where collections are made by temporary lease-holders, from 8 annas to 4 annas in the rupee may be added to the rent.

(c) *abwābs* in the shape of contributions to schools and dispensaries maintained by the landlords are common in the Tangail subdivision.

(d) The most common form of *abwāb* in the eastern part of the district is the realisation of cess at 2 annas in the rupee.

(3) Section 48. The rent paid by under-tenants is often double the rent paid for the same lands by the ryot instead of the legal maximum of 50 per cent. more. It is difficult to

reduce the rents, because the ryot will assert he has sublet his best lands, for which he is paying the highest rate, and even where the entire tenancy has been sublet and the law clearly broken, to enforce the section would mean the eviction of many under-tenants.

(4) Section 29. When rents are enhanced, 3 annas or 4 annas used to be a more common figure than 2 annas. The 5 annas per *pakhi* which the Gauripur and Ramgopālpur landlords tried to exact throughout Jafarshāhi in 1905-1908, worked out at 6 annas. Landlords are more careful now.

*N.B.*—There has never been a case under section 75 for recovery by a tenant of double the amount illegally exacted by the landlord.

(5) Section 188. Co-sharer landlords, whose lands are still *ijmāli*, act independently in numerous ways.

(6) The right of produce-paying tenants to the status of settled ryots is ignored.

In no part of the district has the right of occupancy ryots to transfer their holding been legally recognised. They cannot cut down valuable trees without the consent of the landlord, and they have to pay heavy *nazar* for the privilege of excavating a tank. Sometimes the area so used is not assessed to rent afterwards.

Privileges  
of tenants.

In the eastern villages, where *boro dhān* is grown, the ryots are usually allowed to grow their seedlings on the landlords' *khās* lands. Even when the same tenant uses the same plot year after year, he does not pay any rent. But unless the landlord allowed the higher lands to be used for this purpose, he could not lease *bil* lands at their present high rates.

The privilege of a lump reduction called *anugraha kami* from the rent of individual ryots, as assessed upon the area measured at the village rates, is common all over the district but especially in Alāpsingh. In Atia Pargana one-fifth of the area, or 1½ *gandas* in a *pākhi* are not assessed to rent at all. This concession is called *saraha kami*, and, if it was necessitated by the depredations of the Mughal armies marching through Pakulla, is confirmation of the theory that this was once the trunk road from Delhi to Dacca.

The units of land measurement still prevalent in the district were described in detail in Reynolds' Gazetteer. In Alāpsingh, Bhawāl and Ran Bhawāl the pura of 100 *gaj* by 100 *gaj* with a *hāt* of 25½ inches measures 1.03 acres. In Tappe Sātsikha, the part of Alāpsingh north of the Brahmaputra, as in Sherpur the *kur* is used. The *hāt* varies, but 21 inches is right for most villages and then the *kur* is exactly an acre.

In Jafarshāhi, Pakhuria, Kāgmāri, Ātia, Barabāzu, *i.e.*, all over Tangāil and the south of Jamālpur, the *pākhi* of 30 *karas* or  $7\frac{1}{2}$  *gandas* is the unit. Six *nals* by five *nals* made a *pākhi* but the number of *hāts* in the *nal* varies from 14 to 17 and the number of inches in the *hāt* from 18 to 23. So the *pākhi* may be anything between .221 and .521 of an acre.

In Mymensingh, Susung, Hosenshāhi, Khāliajurī and Nasirujīāl the *ārḥā* is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or  $1\frac{1}{4}$  acres. The big *kāni* of Joānshāhi consisting of 24 *nals* by 20 *nals* equals an acre. The small *kāni* of Hazrādi of 12 *nals* by 10 *nals* only comes to one-third of this. In some villages adjoining Sylhet it is called a *kedārā*.

In view of the recent report of the weights and measures commission it is interesting to note that Reynolds recorded his opinion that these confusing and anomalous measures would never be swept away, so long as legislation on the subject was merely permissive.

The Bengali year of which the 1st *Baisakh* 1323 corresponds with 14th April 1916 is used in all vernacular papers. Susung pargana is remarkable in having an era of its own. The year commences in *Aswin* instead of in *Baisakh* and the reckoning is a year and a half in advance of the ordinary Bengali era. Thus the month of *Baisakh* 1321 B.S. answers to *Baisakh* 1322 of the Susung era; but the Susung year 1323 begins on the 1st *Asin* 1321 B. S. Mr. Reynolds was not able to find out when this era was first introduced; it is traditionally said to be of very great antiquity, and it is certainly recognised in *sanads* dating from a period anterior to the introduction of the English dominion into Bengal.

The district was mapped by Rennell in 1778 together with the rest of Bengal. Large scale maps exist in the India Office, but the largest scale available out here is 5 miles to the inch. These maps differ in value, some of the rivers having been marked according to the oral reports of various subordinates.

The *thākbast* map was made in 1854—1856 and the Revenue Survey in 1855—1857. The *thāk* maps of many villages agree extraordinarily well with their present boundaries and in spite of cases where the boundary has failed to meet, they can be relied on in the great majority of instances to show the lands or *chaks* which belonged to the different *tauzis* then in separate existence. The Revenue Survey is on the scale of 4 inches to the mile except for the Madhupur jungle which is on the scale of 2 inches. The village maps



were arranged and numbered according to parganas, not according to thanas or subdivisions. Hence the Revenue Survey maps of some villages now in Mymensingh are with the Collectors of other districts like Pabna, Rangpur and Tippera. In other districts the 4 inch maps were congregated. For this district the only congregated maps are the 1 inch pargana maps. The *thāk* maps are usually 16 inches to the mile, but sometimes 20 inches and 8 inches.

For certain villages in Alāpsingh and Pukhuria parganas the Revenue Surveyors also made 16-inch maps called *khassra*, which showed fields as well as *chaks*. Some of the Mymensingh specimens are nearly as accurate as the new cadastral maps.

The district settlement began in the spring of 1908, 70 square miles of Dewānganj *thānā* being chosen as an experimental area. The village records will take up 16 lakhs of *khatians* or pages, and will require 25,000 bound volumes. The 16-inch sheets number 11,470, and, in all, over a million reproductions will have to be made.

*Khatians* and maps have been issued free to all concerned and many of the landlords have bought extra copies. There is an increasing tendency to produce *khatians* before the civil and criminal courts, and it is probable that Government officers will find it convenient as a rule to rely on the copies in the hands of the parties rather than to search out what they require in the extra bound copies that have been stored up for their use.

Hitherto the information available about estates in the collectorate, apart from the *thāk* maps, was incomplete and difficult to handle. There is a *jamā-wāsil-bāki* of the estates in Mymensingh in the Noākhāli collectorate, which is anterior to the Permanent Settlement.

The quinquennial papers dated 1200—1202 are in Bengali and give the gross assets of estates mauza by mauza with their areas. There are no papers of the Decennial Settlement, only some *tahoods* or *dowls* in Persian or Bengali dated 1198—1209. The *Taidads* dated 1202 give lists of revenue-free properties included in revenue-paying estates. The *Altamegha* is a similar document for *Bādshāhi* grants.

The *Sarahaddabandi* papers prepared by kanungos under Regulation IV of 1808 were copied into registers in 1874. They give the local measure in use in each village, the rates of rent, the boundaries, the names of proprietors and remuneration of patwāris, etc.



The *Hakiatbandi* Registers prepared in 1851-1852 are also Parganawār. They show all new estates created since the Quinquennial Settlement and are valuable as showing both the quinquennial and the present tanzi number.

The first general registers were opened in 1896 ; ignoring parganas they keep one alphabetical series of estates for the whole district. These are the old B registers and the counterpart for revenue-free and redeemed estates was the old C Register. The Mutation or Entakāli registers maintained between 1837 and the passing of the Land Registration Act contain some valuable information. The present D Register showing the names and shares of the proprietors of each estate is very far from being accurate or up to date, and the C or mauzawar register showing the area of each estate village by village was not too carefully drawn up. The B register of revenue-free estates is even more unsatisfactory.

## CHAPTER XI

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

ON the grant of the Diwāni to the East India Company in 1765, Mymensingh as well as Tippera was included in the "*Iktimam* of Dacca Jalālpur". Tippera and Noakhāli were constituted a separate revenue charge in 1781 under the designation of Bhulua. In 1786 Mymensingh was made a separate Collectorate under H. Burrowes, but the seat of administration remained at Dacca.

In 1787, as the result apparently of a protest from the Directors at home against the growing costs of administration, and also with the idea of levelling up the collections of the respective Collectorates, John Shore, on behalf of the Board of Revenue, submitted a minute for reducing the number of the Collectorships in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from 35 to 23. This minute contains the interesting proposal that, as considerable reduction will take place in the revenue charges in consequence of these arrangements, some increase in the salaries of the Collectors should be recommended to the Supreme Council by granting them a commission on the net collections. At present Shore writes "it is well known that their allowances are in few places equal to their unavoidable disbursements and in general inferior to them".

Lord Cornwallis lost no time in sanctioning Shore's proposals. His letter is dated 21st March 1787. It approves of the suggestions that Collectors should be allowed commissions on the collections and goes on to say that "as one of the principal objects of the new arrangements is to unite the judicial authority in Civil cases as well as that of Magistrate in the Collectors, making the judicial authority of each co-extensive with the charge of the revenue, in future the three Adālots of Pābna, Murshidabād and Dacca, the only ones now

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Hastings' salary, as Member of Council, was Rs. 300 a month. In 1757, salaries of writers increased to Rs. 400 a year which included diet money and all allowances whatever.

Travelling was very expensive. Vansittart's visit (3 months) to the Nawāb cost Rs. 28,000, including Rs. 2,442 as presents to Nawāb's servants.

Clive's voyage out in 1765 cost a lakh of rupees. He gave a detailed account.

left in the Province, will have their jurisdiction confined to the local extent of the cities in which they are situated". The same orders abolished the title of Revenue Chief by which up to this time the Collectors of Dacca, Pābna, Purneah, Chittagong and Murshidabād had been known.

As the result of Shore's scheme Tippera was reunited to Chittagong, the Dacca and Bazurgomeidpur (Bākarganj) Collectorships were amalgamated under Day, and the Mymensingh and Bhulua Collectorships under Wroughton. As Farīdpur was not then a separate district, this accounts for the whole of the present Chittagong and Dacca Commissionerships. This arrangement sounds impossible at the present day. Evidently the general idea was to leave all the country to the east of the joint Brāhmaputra and Mēghna rivers with Sylhet and Tippera as the eastern boundary, under Wroughton, while Dacca faced it on the west. It appears, however, from the list of thānās proposed in 1790 that Kāgmāri, Barabāzu, Pukhuria, Jafarshāhi and Alāpsingh were all along part of Mymensingh and out of the present Tangāil subdivision only the Atia Pargana was included in Dacca. The district therefore extended from Serājganj, the head-quarters of Barabāzu on the west, to Sylhet on the east, and from the Gāro Hills to the Bay of Bengal. The addition of the Sarāil, Haripur, Daudpur and Bejrā parganas of Tippera up to 1830 still further increased the unwieldiness of the district.

Dacca, though on the wrong side of the river for the Mymensingh Collector, was not otherwise an inconvenient headquarters, as Wroughton pointed out when two years later a number of dacoities caused the Board to enquire why he resided at Dacca instead of in his own district. The Board forwarded Wroughton's reply to the Governor General, and pointed out that his district extended 200 miles from north to south.

The Governor General hereupon called upon the Board to submit a plan for making the Collectorships as compact as possible and the residence of the Collector central. The Board forwarded in reply\* a long minute by their Secretary Harrington in which he discussed six principles for a new division of the Collectorships, and also recommends that Tippera should again be made a separate district with additions from the unwieldy Dacca and Mymensingh charges. They recorded their opinion at the same time that "the Governor

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\* Board to Governor General, 29th October 1789.